

**MY SERMON OUTLINES**

(VOLUME THREE)

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## PRACTICAL PERSONAL EVANGELISM

### Introduction

1. Spring time is a time of growth and new life; trees are budding, flowers are blooming, new lambs can be heard bleating, and a man's thoughts turn to the grass that needs mowing already.
2. It is also about this time of year that this congregation turns its thoughts to numerical growth, through preaching of the gospel of life.
3. Each of us is a member of the Church of God, and, as such, we have an individual responsibility to participate in the spreading of the gospel. We need to involve ourselves in the corporate efforts of the church, but we also have an individual responsibility to evangelize to the lost.

*“For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: For necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!” (1 Corinthians 9:16).*

### I. THE NEED TO EVANGELIZE (Read Romans 3:10-12)

A. All has sinned.

*“As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Romans 3:10-12)*

B. Majority of people will be lost, only a few will be saved (Matthew 7:13-14 < Matthew 20:16; 22:14; Luke 13:23).

C. The fate of the sinner is eternal torment and punishment (Matthew 25:46; Luke 16:28).

D. The following illustrations show the number of souls that are being lost, and the desperate need for more laborers in the vineyard.

1. Man on cliff edge saving lemmings.
2. Man at foot of dam stopping leak, which gets worse.

### II. NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLES

A. The Philippian Church was holding forth the word of life (Philippians 2:15-16).

B. Paul praised the Thessalonian Church for their evangelistic effort (1 Thessalonians 1:8).

C. Aquila and Priscilla preached Jesus to Apollos (Acts 18:24-26).

D. Cornelius gathered his friends and family to hear the gospel (Acts 10:24-27).

E. Andrew brought his brother Simon to Jesus (John 1:40-42a).

F. Philip brought Nathanael to the Lord (John 1:43-46).

G. Many were bringing their children to Jesus (Matthew 19:13-14).

H. Persecution did not prevent Christians preaching the word (Acts 8:4).

### III. PREREQUISITES TO EVANGELISM

A. You must have a desire to save the lost.

1. If we have any natural affection (2 Timothy 3:3), if we have any love for our neighbor (Galatians 5:14), we will surely desire their salvation (Romans 10:1).
2. If we understand the terror of the Lord, we will feel compelled to warn others (2 Corinthians 5:11).

*“And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude 1:23)*

3. Then, like Paul, we will view our responsibility to evangelize, as a necessity laid upon us (1 Corinthians 9:16).

**B. Remember where the real power to save lies.**

1. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16 > Hebrews 4:12; Romans 10:17 <> 2 Corinthians 5:19b).

2. We are only laborers, sowers, sowing the seed, the word of God (Luke 8:11).

3. But it is God who gives the increase (1 Corinthians 3:5-7 <> Acts 16:14).

**C. Pray!**

1. Pray for the Lord to raise up more laborers.

*“Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2).*

2. Pray that the word may have free course (2 Thessalonians 3:1).

3. Pray for boldness to speak (Acts 4:29-31).

**IV. PRACTICAL EVANGELISM**

**A. Corporate involvement (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).**

1. Join in the door knocking effort.

2. 'Table in the market'.

3. Help to distribute Bible course cards.

4. Help distribute leaflet advertisements when we have a gospel meeting.

**B. Personal involvement - face to face.**

1. Invite friends, family, and neighbors to services.

2. Make the effort to share the gospel with that workmate that you have put off doing for so long.

3. When the gas man, electric man, insurance agent, etc. calls at your home, give them a tract as he leaves.

4. Set up a weekly Bible study in your home, and send invitations to your neighbors.

**C. Personal involvement - indirect.**

1. Put a 5” x 3” postcard in a newsagent window, advertising the free Bible course (From 20p - 90p per week).

2. Leave tracts etc. in public places - restaurants, cinemas, restrooms.

3. When you write letters, whether to friends, family, pop a tract in with it.

4. If you travel by public transport, leave a Bible course card on the seat.

5. If you know someone with a problem, find a tract or tape on that subject that might help them.

6. Support an evangelist!



## **Conclusion**

1. The world is full of people who are dead in trespasses and sins, and unless they hear the gospel, they cannot be saved; as the scripture says, *“taking vengeance on those who do not know God”*. But how shall they hear unless you speak? How shall they be saved except you show them the way?
2. Final thought: Read Ezekiel 3:18-19.



## PRACTICALLY INSTANT RETRIBUTION

### Introduction

[A brief word explaining Karma]

1. When God made His covenant with Israel, He promised them security, wealth, and possessions, if they kept His laws. But if they forgot Him and disobeyed His laws they would lose all such blessings (Exodus 23:20-26; Deuteronomy 7:12-16; 28:15-68). This theme runs all through the Old Testament and so it is easy to understand why people might see material wealth as conformation that one is pleasing to God, and that misfortune and suffering is a sign of the Lord's disapproval and punishment for sin. The statement of Jesus to a crippled man seems to substantiate this belief: *"See you have been made well. Sin nor more, lest a worse thing come upon you"* (John 5:14).
2. But the Bible also admits that the righteous suffer, even though they have not sinned to deserve it: *"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 5:10), and *"But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed"* (1 Peter 3:14). Jesus, on one occasion, mentioned an incident in which eighteen people were killed by accident, Jesus clearly says that they were no worse sinners than others (Luke 13:1-5).
3. It is clear, then, that we ought to have a balanced view. But there were some in Jesus' day that did not have such a balanced view, believing that all misfortune and suffering was because of some sin committed (John 9:1-2; Luke 13:1-5). This thinking is not new, Job 4:7-9; 5:6. Even today there are Christians who hold such a belief. And, as we have already mentioned, a similar belief is one of the fundamental teachings of Hinduism.
4. In this lesson we will examine the evil of such a view, i.e. instant retribution.

### I. THE EFFECT OF INSTANT RETRIBUTION ON THE HEART

#### A. Toward the 'sinner'.

1. They (i.e. those suffering some misfortune or affliction) are considered accursed of God (John 9:2).
2. Because they are viewed as sinners, they are despised (Luke 18:9).
3. The heart is desensitized to the suffering of other. Such insensitivity can be seen in Eliphaz's words in response to the suffering of Job:

*"Whoever perished being innocent...those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same"*  
(Job 4:7-8).

4. Justice, mercy, and compassion are neglected (Cp. Matthew 23:23; Luke 10:30-32).

#### B. Toward self

1. Material blessings and good health are seen as a sign of God's approval of our lifestyle and beliefs (Luke 18:9). Pride.
2. What if some misfortune or suffering should befall them? They would simply blame Satan for such! Thus, their righteousness remains in tact.
3. Considering all the above points, it is easy to see how such a person would want to separate themselves from other, who to them are sinners. [Note: This describes exactly the attitude of the Pharisees, in fact, the word Pharisee means "separated ones"].

## II. A BELIEF IN INSTANT RETRIBUTION MAY BE USED AS SHIELD AND A WEAPON

### A. A shield

1. Despite the clear reasoning of the blind man, the Pharisees dismissed all that he said on the grounds that he was “*completely born in sins*” (John 9:34).
2. Thus, whatever is taught by the 'sinner' that is not palatable may be dismissed. And so the mind is closed.

### B. Conform, or else!

1. The natives of Malta concluded that Paul was a murderer but had escaped the sea. Now when a viper bit Paul they saw it as justice (or instant retribution) being done (Acts 28:4).
2. So, then, a person could be threatened and bullied into conforming to certain behavior and beliefs.

## III. JESUS' REACTION TO SUFFERING

### A. Misfortune and suffering not necessarily a punishment for sin.

1. Jesus said concerning the blind man, “*Neither this man nor his parents sinned...*” (John 9:3; Cp. Ezekiel 18:20).
2. Two incidents are mentioned (Luke 13:1, 4), were they being punished for their sins? Jesus replied, “*Do you think that they were worse sinners...I tell you, no*” (Luke 13:3, 5).
3. Was Job's suffering because of some sin he committed? The Lord said to Job's friends, who said it was so, “*My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right...*” (Job 42:7).

### B. Reaction to suffering

1. Not judgment, compassion (John 9:1-7; Luke 7:12-15).
2. Our attitude should be the same (Luke 10:30-37) Parable of the Good Samaritan.

## Conclusion

1. Holding such an extreme view of sin and punishment hardens the heart against the sufferings of our fellow man. It can also have the effect of closing our minds to learning, since we are not willing to listen to the words of a 'sinner'.
2. Because suffering and misfortune comes upon us all (Matthew 5:45) it means then that the 'instant retributionalist' has to explain misfortune and suffering in his own life. This he does by blaming such on Satan. The thinking, then, is “*The Devil may bring misfortune and suffering into my righteous life, but it is the result of sin that brings it into yours*”.
3. Christians, I believe, should have a more balanced view. Maybe, at times, we are suffering for some sin we have committed. Maybe, sometimes, we suffer because we are living righteously. But bad things may also happen just in the normal course of living.
4. These things being so, we ought to be careful about making judgments about the suffering of others and ourselves. Rather than judging, let us respond with love and compassion.

*“Remember the prisoners as if chained with them, and those who are mistreated, since you yourselves are in the body also” (Hebrews 13:3)*

# PRESSING ON UNTO PERFECTION

*Conforming To Christ's Image*

## Introduction

### 1. Consider what it means to be “in Christ”:

#### a. Those baptized into Christ have put on Christ:

*“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27)*

#### b. Those in Christ have no condemnation to fear:

*“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:1)*

#### c. Those in Christ have received every spiritual blessing:

*“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:1-3)*

### 2. We were guilty but have now been justified:

#### a. Justified in His name:

*“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)*

#### b. Justified by His blood and saved from wrath:

*“Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him” (Romans 5:9)*

### 3. Having been immersed, forgiven, and justified in His name, are we now perfect?

## I. WITNESSES OF IMPERFECTION

### A. One step forward, two steps back!

#### 1. The brethren at Corinth were acting like mere men:

*“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men” (1 Corinthians 3:1-3)*

#### 2. The brethren in Galatia were in danger of falling from grace:

*“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (Galatians 5:1-4)*

B. Down and out:

1. Demas was a fellow laborer with Paul (Philemon 1:24) but his love of the world was his undoing:

*“For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia” (2 Timothy 4:10)*

2. Peter mentioned certain brethren who had been overcome by the corruption that is in the world:

*“For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning” (2 Peter 2:18-20)*

C. Any honest person will confess that they are not perfect:

1. James gives witness to man’s imperfection:

*“For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body” (James 3:2)*

*“And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell” (James 3:6)*

*“But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (James 3:8)*

2. John is even more direct:

*“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us” (1 John 1:8-10)*

[Yes, we were cleansed from our past sins and justified in His name. Yet this, by no means, implies that we are perfect in all our ways. In fact, there is still a long way to go before we even come close to conforming to the image of Christ. We shall now consider two questions: in what areas do we need to strive for perfection? What will aid us as we strive toward that goal?]

## II. PRESSING ON UNTO PERFECTION

A. Conduct:

1. Commands to watch our conduct:

- a. Though specifically written to Timothy, Paul’s instruction is applicable to all Christians:

*“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in speech, in conduct, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12)*

- b. Specifically for all Christians:

*“Only let your conduct be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel” (Philippians 1:27)*

2. There are basically two realms in which we need to watch our conduct:

- a. In the House of God:

*“But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to conduct thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15)*

b. Toward outsiders:

*“Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity” (Colossians 4:5)*

3. Our conduct must be grounded and shaped on our fear and reverence for God:

*“And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear” (1 Peter 1:17)*

B. Speech:

1. Our speech should always be governed by the principles of religion:

*“Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” (Colossians 4:6)*

2. For the benefit of hearers:

*“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers” (Ephesians 4:29)*

3. The mark of the wise:

*“The wise in heart shall be called prudent: and the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning. Understanding is a wellspring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of fools is folly. The Heart Of The Wise Teacheth His Mouth, And Addeth Learning To His Lips. Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones” (Proverbs 16:21-24)*

[Having shown that we must continually strive to improve our conduct and speech, we will now consider the aids that are in place unto that end.]

### III. AIDS UNTO PERFECTION

A. Teachers:

*“Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Colossians 1:28)*

*“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13)*

B. Study:

*“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)*

C. The example of others:

*“Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample” (Philippians 3:15-17)*

*“Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you” (Philippians 4:9)*

*“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation” (Hebrews 13:7)*

*“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1)*

### **Conclusion**

1. When we first believed, we repented of our sins and were washed and justified in Jesus name.
2. Yet we ought not to suppose that we are perfect! We have seen how the Corinthians were acting like mere men, and how the Galatians were in danger of falling from grace. James and John also demonstrate that we are by no means perfect and need the blood of Jesus to wash away our sins each day.
3. But God has provided aids to bring to perfection: teachers, the word, and the example of others.
4. The greatest example is Jesus. In all that we do or say, let us ask, *“What would Jesus do?”* or *“What would Jesus say?”*

*“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Colossians 3:1-10)*



## PROBLEMS NEHEMIAH FACED

### Introduction

1. Despite the many prophets that called them to repentance, Israel persisted in their unfaithfulness to God. So, in accordance with His word, God used the Assyrians and Babylonians to chastise Judah and Israel. In 722 B.C., the Assyrians deported the ten northern tribes throughout the known world (2 Kings 17) and in 586 B.C., the Babylonians took the two southern tribes into captivity (2 Kings 25).
2. During their captivity, the balance of world power changed hands to the Persians and after 70 years, the Lord began bringing His people back home. The book of Ezra begins with the decree of king Cyrus to return God's people to Jerusalem to rebuild God's house in 539 B.C. Zerubbabel and Joshua led the first return (Ezra 1-6) and rebuilt the temple, Ezra led the second return (Ezra 7-10) in 458 B.C., and Nehemiah records the third return to rebuild Jerusalem's walls in 445 B.C.
3. Nehemiah served as the King's cupbearer and God caused him to find favour in the eyes of the king when he desired to return to Jerusalem to rebuild its walls (Nehemiah 2:1-6). In this lesson, we shall look at some of the problems he faced as he undertook this work and consider some applications regarding the building of the Lord's spiritual house – the church – today.

### I. RIDICULE AND CRITICISM

- A. As they began to rebuild the walls, God's people faced ridicule and criticism (Nehemiah 4:1-3).

*“Now it came about that when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became furious and very angry and mocked the Jews. He spoke in the presence of his brothers and the wealthy men of Samaria and said, What are these feeble Jews doing? Are they going to restore it for themselves? Can they offer sacrifices? Can they finish in a day? Can they revive the stones from the dusty rubble even the burned ones? Now Tobiah the Ammonite was near him and he said, Even what they are building--if a fox should jump on it, he would break their stone wall down!” (Nehemiah 4:1-3 NASB)*

1. Sanballat and Tobiah ridiculed God's people in an attempt to discourage them from building the wall. Instead of trading insults, Nehemiah prayed.

*“Hear, O our God, how we are despised! Return their reproach on their own heads and give them up for plunder in a land of captivity. Do not forgive their iniquity and let not their sin be blotted out before You, for they have demoralized the builders” (Nehemiah 4:4-5 NASB)*

2. The work prospered because the people had set their hearts on accomplishing the task. They did not lose heart or give up, but persevered in the work.

*“So we built the wall and the whole wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work” (Nehemiah 4:6 NASB)*

- B. We also face opposition as we try to build God's spiritual house - the church. Christians often comes under attack because of their insistence that there is only one way and because of their stand on moral issues. Christians are also mocked because of their stance on Biblical authority and insisting that the church must be built according to the pattern.

1. When the early disciples faced opposition they responded in the same way as Nehemiah - They prayed (Acts 4:23-31).
2. We should never allow persecution, ridicule, and criticism to keep us from doing God's will. If we continue diligently in pray and have a mind to work, we will accomplish His will.

## II. OPEN WARFARE

A. When ridicule and criticism didn't work, they conspired to fight against God's people.

*“Now when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repair of the walls of Jerusalem went on, and that the breaches began to be closed, they were very angry. All of them conspired together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause a disturbance in it. But we prayed to our God, and because of them we set up a guard against them day and night. Thus in Judah it was said, The strength of the burden bearers is failing, Yet there is much rubbish; And we ourselves are unable To rebuild the wall. Our enemies said, They will not know or see until we come among them, kill them and put a stop to the work. When the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times, They will come up against us from every place where you may turn” (Nehemiah 4:7-12 NASB)*

1. Nehemiah encouraged the people to be prepared at all times.

*“Then I stationed men in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, the exposed places, and I stationed the people in families with their swords, spears and bows. When I saw their fear, I rose and spoke to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people: Do not be afraid of them; remember the Lord who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses” (Nehemiah 4:13-14 NASB)*

2. They were to aid one another in this great work.

*“I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, The work is great and extensive, and we are separated on the wall far from one another. At whatever place you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us. So we carried on the work with half of them holding spears from dawn until the stars appeared” (Nehemiah 4:19-21 NASB)*

B. We, too, are now at war (1 Timothy 1:18; 6:12; Jude 3).

1. But our warfare is not carnal but spiritual.

*“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NASB)*

2. Christianity is illegal in some countries and anyone who preaches the gospel is at risk of deportation, imprisonment, or possibly worse. Christianity is not banned in this country, yet, but we have already seen moves to ban the teaching of creationism and forbid prayers in schools. The rise of atheism and false religions, and the increase in immorality show that Christianity is dwindling and is, therefore, under attack. We need to realize that we are under attack but continue to work with a trowel in one hand and sword of the Spirit in the other.

## III. INTERNAL TROUBLES

A. All their problems had come from outside but now there was trouble from the inside.

*“Now there was a great outcry of the people and of their wives against their Jewish brothers. For there were those who said, We, our sons and our daughters are many; therefore let us get grain that we may eat and live. There were others who said, We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards and our houses that we might get grain because of the famine. Also there were those who said, We have borrowed money for the king's tax on our fields and our vineyards. Now our flesh is like the flesh of our brothers, our children like their children. Yet behold, we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters are forced into bondage already, and we are helpless because our fields and vineyards belong to others” (Nehemiah 5:1-5 NASB)*

1. Many of the returned exiles were suffering at the hands of some of their rich countrymen. The rich would lend money and when the debtors missed payments, they would take over their fields. Left with no means of income, the debtors were forced to give up their children to slavery.
2. Nehemiah quickly and courageously corrected the problem.

*“Then I was very angry when I had heard their outcry and these words. I consulted with myself and contended with the nobles and the rulers and said to them, You are exacting usury, each from his brother! Therefore, I held a great assembly against them. I said to them, We according to our ability have redeemed our Jewish brothers who were sold to the nations; now would you even sell your brothers that they may be sold to us? Then they were silent and could not find a word to say. Again I said, The thing which you are doing is not good; should you not walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the nations, our enemies? And likewise I, my brothers and my servants are lending them money and grain. Please, let us leave off this usury. Please, give back to them this very day their fields, their vineyards, their olive groves and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money and of the grain, the new wine and the oil that you are exacting from them. Then they said, We will give it back and will require nothing from them; we will do exactly as you say. So I called the priests and took an oath from them that they would do according to this promise” (Nehemiah 5:6-12 NASB)*

**B. Internal problems often hinder churches from doing their work.**

1. Problems do occur within congregations and, unless they are dealt with, disrupt the work of the church. Much time and energy is lost which could otherwise be used in leading souls to Christ.
2. We need good leaders who courageously rise to the occasion and help us to quickly correct our problems. Problems, when quickly corrected, can be put behind us and the church can move forward.

*“But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another” (Galatians 5:15 NASB)*

**IV. COMPROMISE (Nehemiah 6:1-4)**

- A. Sanballat, Tobiah and their company were desperate. The wall was almost completed and their efforts to stop its construction were failing.**

*“Now when it was reported to Sanballat, Tobiah, to Geshem the Arab and to the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall, and that no breach remained in it, although at that time I had not set up the doors in the gates, then Sanballat and Geshem sent a message to me, saying, Come, let us meet together at Chephirim in the plain of Ono. But they were planning to harm me. So I sent messengers to them, saying, I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you? They sent messages to me four times in this manner, and I answered them in the same way” (Nehemiah 6:1-4 NASB)*

1. They asked Nehemiah to come down to the plains of Ono and meet with them. Consider the following comments on this invitation:

“In Nehemiah 6, it looks like the enemies of God have realized that Nehemiah was going to complete his mission of rebuilding the city, and they are looking for a way to stop the progress. Calling Nehemiah out to meet them is an invitation to meet them half way or to work out an agreement that would offer Nehemiah something in return for not reestablishing Judah. That is compromise. As you can see in the next few verses, Sanballat is concerned that the Jews are going to rise up and retake the land. I suspect that the message to Nehemiah would have been one that offered some sort of protection as long as the Jews did not try to take the land back. Nehemiah knew that such compromise, or even taking time to entertain the offer, would hinder the work he was trying to accomplish. So he repeatedly rejected these requests for such a meeting” (Garland Pope).

“The Samaritan leaders, convinced that they could not overcome Nehemiah by open arms, resolved to gain advantage over him by deceit and stratagem. With this in view, under pretext of terminating their differences in an amicable manner, they invited him to a conference” (JFB).

“Ridicule and the threat of warfare had been unsuccessful and so they seek to murder Nehemiah. They attempt to lure him into a meeting under the pretence of resolving their problems and coming to some compromise” (D. Collins, *Quotes & Things, Commentary, Nehemiah*).

2. But Nehemiah perceived that their plan would only harm him and his cause.

B. The spirit of compromise is very dangerous.

1. The divisions with the church are very lamentable and, like Jesus, we pray that all believers may be one (John 17:11). Conservative churches often receive letters from liberal churches to attend unity meetings but the price of the unity they desire would mean compromising our convictions...

“The liberal mindset says ‘The Bible does not say NOT to do this, so we can’ where a conservative approach says ‘We will only do those things that the Bible says we can.’ So liberals tend to involve the church in activities that we do not see authorized in the NT because they think they are good ideas. **They then ask other churches to join them in these activities, claiming that we can do more good if we work together in these efforts.** The compromise David speaks of is setting aside our convictions on these matters in order to form some sort of collective alliance with other churches” (Garland Pope).

2. Should we seek a unity at the cost of compromising our convictions? No. Unity must be based on the word of God.

## Conclusion

1. As God’s people began to rebuild the walls, they faced ridicule and criticism, the threat of open warfare, the temptation to compromise, and also the threat of trouble that arise from within. Today, the Lord’s people are busy building the spiritual house of God – the church – and we face these same problems ridicule and criticism, spiritual warfare, temptations to compromise, and threat of trouble from within.

2. What is the proper response to these problems?

a. Whatever the problems we face in preaching the gospel, we must go to the Lord in prayer.

*“When they had been released, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, O Lord, it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM, who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, ‘WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE THINGS? THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND, AND THE RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST.’ For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur. And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus” (Acts 4:23-30 NASB)*

b. Rather than discouraging us from the work, we should be filled with even more of a determination to complete the work the Lord has given us to do.

*“But so that it will not spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no longer to any man in this name. And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:17-20 NASB)*

3. We have work to do, so let's get on and do it!



## PUT AWAY YOUR SWORD

### Introduction

1. Anger is something we all experience. Some are slow to anger, while others flare up at the slightest provocation.
2. The Bible often speaks of anger and in this lesson, so let us see what advice is offered on this subject.

### I. THE FOUNDATIONS OF ANGER

#### A. Threats.

1. Overcrowding - loss of privacy.
2. Increase in crime - fear.
3. Insecure employment - anxiety.

#### B. Frustration.

1. Just missed the train.
2. Stuck in a traffic jam.
3. A crying baby.

#### C. Rejection.

1. Arrive home and you are ignored.
2. Suggestions ignored.
3. Failure at job interviews.

#### D. Death and Disaster.

1. The death of a loved one.
2. Physically handicapped.
3. Loss of property through natural forces.

### II. IS ANGER RIGHT?

#### A. References to Anger.

1. Three hundred and sixty five references to God's anger.
2. Eighty references to man's anger.

#### B. God's Anger.

1. God's anger is proper because He is divine.
2. God's anger is a natural expression and reaction to man's sin and rebellion.
3. God is slow to anger (Psalms.103:8; Jonah 4:2).

#### C. Man's Anger.

1. Moses was angry at the people's idolatry (Exodus 32:1-35).
2. When the people cried for water, Moses became angry with them and spoke foolishly. God rebuked him on this occasion (Numbers 20:2-13).

#### D. Peter's Anger (John 18:1-11).

1. Soldiers came to arrest Jesus (John 18:3).

2. Peter, responding to his feelings, cut off the ear of the high priest's servant (John 18:10).
3. Jesus' response was, "*Put away your sword*" (John 18:11).

E. Be Angry and Sin Not.

1. "*Be angry...*" thus, anger is not sinful (Ephesians 4:26).
2. "*...and sin not*" How we express our anger could be sinful (Ephesians 4:26).

### III. WAYS TO EXPRESS ANGER

A. Rage.

1. Verbal tantrum - a complete loss of control over what is said.
2. Verbal and physical - a complete loss of control over what is said and done.
3. The purpose of such is to degrade, hurt, and insult.

B. Resentment.

1. Anger is held in and awaits an opportunity for revenge.
2. Resentment may cause the other person to become angry.
3. People who hold in their anger make themselves more prone to illnesses and depression.

### IV. THE PROPER RESPONSE TO ANGER

- A. The disciples tried to keep children away from Jesus. Jesus' response was INDIGNATION and He sought to correct them (Mark 10:13-15).
- B. The disciples became INDIGNANT towards a woman for wasting valuable and precious ointment. They attempted to correct the matter (Matthew 26:6-9).

### V. PREVENTING ANGER

- A. Have a forgiving spirit (Matthew 18:21-35).
- B. Love brethren (Colossians 3:13; Ephesians 4:32).
- C. Turn the other cheek (Romans 12:14, 19).

### Conclusion

1. We all become angry at times and it is not a sin to become angry. What is sinful is if we respond to that anger with rage or resentment; which seeks only to hurt and destroy. The proper and right response is indignation, which seeks to teach, correct, and build up.
2. The following thoughts express the true nature of indignation.
  - “Rage seeks to do wrong, resentment seeks to hide wrong, and indignation seeks to correct wrongs.”
  - “Rage and resentment seek to destroy people, indignation seeks to destroy evil.”
  - “Rage and resentment seek vengeance, indignation seeks justice.”
  - “Rage is guided by selfishness, resentment is guided by cowardice, and indignation is guided by mercy.”
  - “Rage and resentment are forbidden in the Bible, indignation is required.”



## REMEMBERING HOW TO BEHAVE

*Great Truths From Ephesians 2:1-3*

### Introduction

1. The Bible says:

*“Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead” (Ecclesiastes 9:3).*

*“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9)*

2. The human heart is “*deceitful above all things,*” especially when it comes to self-deceit (e.g. 1 Corinthians 3:18; 1 John 1:8). However, our hearts can be especially deceptive when it comes to remembering. Someone upsets us and we are able to recall everything bad that person has ever done to us, and every bad aspect of that person’s character is recalled. But we forget all the good they may have done, and all the good aspects of their character. Such evil thinking ought not to be characteristic of any Christian. Jesus teaches us that evil thinking leads to bad behavior (Mark 7:21-22); and where these begin, degeneration is inevitable (Galatians 5:15).

3. One of the reasons that Christians allow evil thinking, and the inevitable bad behavior, to upsurge, is because of an attitude that is allowed to develop when one takes for granted and forgets all the blessings that God has bestowed. Moreover, where there was once humility and thankfulness, there now reigns pride. The following passage from Deuteronomy was a warning (and still is) to the nation of Israel.

*“For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass. When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage” (Deuteronomy 8:7-14; cp. Proverbs 30:7-9).*

4. All of us here today are greatly blessed; how then can we prevent ourselves from degenerating into sinful thoughts and behavior? By constantly reminding ourselves of what God has done for us in Christ Jesus.

### I. DEAD IN TRESPASSES AND SINS

A. The Holy Spirit reminds us of the condition we were once in:

*“And you hath he quickened, who were dead [nekros-3498] in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1)*

B. The death spoken of here is a spiritual death, but in what sense were we dead?

1. The text tells that this death was in connection with our “*trespasses and sins*”, and it is this sin that separates us from God:

*“Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear; But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear” (Isaiah 59:1-2)*

2. While a man remains separated from God, while he remains dead in sins, he had “*no hope*” and is “*without God in the world*” (Ephesians 2:12); he is also unable to receive

*“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14)*

C. Being spiritually dead fulfilling only the desires of the flesh and of the mind, we

*“Were by nature the children of wrath, even as others” (Ephesians 2:3)*

## II. SAVED BY GRACE

A. Did we save ourselves?

1. Did we convict ourselves of sin? No, spirit convicts of sin (John 16:8). Was it we who sought after God? No, (see Romans 3:10-11 > 10:20). Was it our decision to repent? No. Spirit gives new birth (John 3:5; James 1:18; Ephesians 2:10).

B. Saved by grace.

1. God brought us to life:

*“Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ...For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9)*

2. This free gift of salvation, then, was given to us in Christ; as Paul, by inspiration of the Spirit, says,

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3)*

## III. MADE NEAR BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

A. Jesus chose to come and die for us (John 12:23, 27).

B. Jesus voluntarily laid down His life (John 10:17-18).

C. And His blood was poured out for the remission of our sins (John 19:31-35; Matthew 26:28).

## Conclusion

1. How will a constant remembrance of these things affect our behavior?

- a. Jesus tells us that as a man thinks in his heart, so is he (Mark 7:21-22); and this is where the problem always begins, (e.g. Matthew 24:45-51).
- b. Keeping such things in mind will, then, modify our behavior (cp. Proverbs 23:7), hopefully! See the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:21-35).

2. Are there any seeds of bitterness within you? Are there any filled with wrath? Are there any who envy? Is there anyone who resents or hates his brother? Is any guilty of gossip or slander? Has any lied or deceived? Has any spoken harshly or unkindly? Who is a fornicator, a thief, a drunkard, or a murderer? **Brethren, the old man has been put to death.**

- a. Remember, that you were once dead in trespasses and sins, and that now you are dead to sin (Ephesians 2:1; Romans 6:11-12).
- b. Remember, that you were not the one who found God, rather, He found you (Romans 10:20).
- c. Also, remember that it is through the blood of Jesus that you have been forgiven (Colossians 1:14).

Read Colossians 3:12-14.

## “REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES”

### *Understanding Fellowship and Disfellowship*

#### **Introduction**

1. In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul expresses his surprise that there is immorality among them, and if this wasn't bad enough, it was immorality of such a kind that did not even exist among the Gentiles: *“That someone has his father's wife”* (1 Corinthians 5:1).
  - a. Arndt & Gingrich say that this means *“that someone has taken his father's wife as his own wife.”*
  - b. This being so, it shows that such marriages, although made legal by a civil ceremony, were not recognized by God. In such cases of fornication the wife (as considered so by the law of the land) should be put away (Matthew 19:9) and a lawful divorce sought.
2. But what dismayed Paul even more was their whole attitude in this matter: they had become arrogant and not rather mourned and removed this man from among them (1 Corinthians 5:2).
3. Here are some of the things we shall be considering in this lesson:
  - a. The definition of *“fellowship”*.
  - b. Paul's judgement concerning the immoral person.
  - c. What he expected the Corinthians to do.
  - d. The reasons for taking such action.
  - e. Social ostracism.

#### **I. DEFINING FELLOWSHIP**

- A. The word *fellowship* means, *“a mutual sharing, partnership, joint participation, communion”* (See Vine's). Many brethren apply to this to banquets (held in the building), coffee mornings (held in the building), picnics in the park, vacations, etc. Are they fellowshiping according to the general definition of the word? Certainly!
- B. But where some apply the word *fellowship* to these social events, the Bible applies it quite differently. In the Bible, the word *fellowship* applies to spiritual things.
  1. Let us briefly consider how this word is used in Scripture:
    - a. The Bible says that God called us *“into **fellowship** with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord”* (1 Corinthians 1:9).
    - b. The Bible says we should not be *“bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what **fellowship** has light with darkness?”* (2 Corinthians 6:14).
    - c. Paul's closing benediction to the Corinthians is that the *“grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the **fellowship** of the Holy Spirit, be with you all”* (2 Corinthians 13:14).
    - d. Paul said that having explained what he was doing among the Gentiles, resulted in James, Cephas, and John giving to him and Barnabas *“the right hand of **fellowship**”* (Galatians 2:9).
    - e. The Philippians were urged to work together on the basis of the *“encouragement in Christ...the consolation of love...the **fellowship** of the Holy Spirit”* (Philippians 2:1).
    - f. Paul counted among his gains in Christ *“the **fellowship** of His sufferings”* (Philippians 3:10).
    - g. Concerning the faith between Philemon and Onesimus, Paul says, *“And I pray that the **fellowship** of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake”* (Philemon 1:6).

- h. John wrote to certain brethren saying, “*What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have **fellowship** with us; and indeed our **fellowship** is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ*” (1 John 1:3).
  - i. John teaches that fellowship with God is maintained by walking in the light: “*If we say that we have **fellowship** with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have **fellowship** with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin*” (1 John 1:6-7).
  - j. The fellowship of the early church is described in the context of their spiritual life: “*They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to **fellowship**, to the Lord's Supper and to prayer*” (Acts 2:42).
2. There is nowhere in the Bible that the term “*fellowship*” is ever used to refer to social recreational functions.
- a. It is predominantly reserved for the higher spiritual sharing we experience through faith in God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit.
  - b. Secondly, it is used to describe contributions to preachers and needy saints.
- C. It is essential to define the word *fellowship* as used in the Scriptures to avoid any misunderstandings whenever we use the term *disfellowship*.
- 1. It is true that the word *disfellowship* is not in the Bible but the concept is there.
  - 2. It is much the same when people say that the word *trinity* is not in the Bible. While true, the concept is there, nonetheless.

**Bible Fellowship**

In Bible fellowship, each member works in harmony with every other member to achieve a common goal, and every member has a function to perform. Sadly, the fellowship subject is greatly abused in the religious world, and among brethren. For some, it includes not only fellowship halls, but potlucks, youth rallies, hayrides, gyms, recreational activities, chili suppers, pancake breakfasts, and a host of other events. Churches engage in these social and secular practices and group them under “bible fellowship.” All these events turn into periods of mutual fellowship and edification. Brethren have become enamored with such ventures, calling them “good works.” What we need to see is that these folks may have fellowship, in the general definition of the word, but they do not have the fellowship defined in the New Testament. Remember this one point—the scripture never uses the word *fellowship* in the physical sense—only the spiritual (Keith Greer)

**The Text:**

*“<sup>1</sup>It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife. <sup>2</sup>You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst. <sup>3</sup>For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. <sup>4</sup>In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, <sup>5</sup>I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup>Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? <sup>7</sup>Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. <sup>8</sup>Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. <sup>9</sup>I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; <sup>10</sup>I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. <sup>11</sup>But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler--not even to eat with such a one. <sup>12</sup>For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? <sup>13</sup>But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES” (1 Corinthians 5:1-13 NASB)*

**II. DEALING WITH IMMORALITY IN THE CHURCH**

**CORPRATE RESPONSIBILITY**

- A. A clear case of immorality existed in the church:
  - 1. The man<sup>1</sup> was still in fellowship with the brethren (5:2).
  - 2. The brethren had become “*puffed up*” or “*arrogant*” (5:2). This probably doesn’t refer directly to the case of incest but in relation to the notion that they were wise and had spiritual gifts in abundance. They boasted of these things and considered themselves as something great, even though they tolerated immorality.

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<sup>1</sup> The woman is not mentioned and this is probably because she is not a Christian.

B. The Apostle Paul’s Judgment in the Matter:

1. As far as Paul was concerned, this was a clear and indefensible case of immorality and, although he was not personally present, had passed judgment on the man who continued in this sin (5:3).
2. With apostolic authority, Paul had decided, and he commanded them to “*deliver such a one to Satan*” (5:5). At the end of the chapter he makes it quite clear what he means by this, “*Remove the wicked man from among yourselves*” (5:13).

C. When was this action to be taken and what did it involve?

1. This action was to be taken “*when you are assembled*” (5:3). The whole church was to be involved in this very serious action.
2. The words “*deliver such a one to Satan*” (5:5) and “*Remove the wicked man from among yourselves*” (5:13) probably refers to a formal declaration to the whole congregation of the sin this man is committing and an announcement that he is no longer to be considered a member of the congregation. The wicked person is no longer a member of the congregation, he is no longer in fellowship with the saints, and he is no longer in fellowship with God. This is what we mean by disfellowship.
3. You might want to consider this apostolic judgment upon Simon the sorcerer: he was a Christian and at some point later his heart became filled with wicked intentions:

*“Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit. Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit. But Peter said to him, **May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you.** For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity. But Simon answered and said, Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me” (Acts 8:17-24 NASB)*

Is there a connection with what Peter says here and with what Paul says regarding the purpose of delivering the wicked man over to Satan “for the destruction of the flesh”?

Repentance brings about restoration and salvation. Is this what Paul meant when he said, “so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus”?

III. THE PURPOSE OF DISFELLOWSHIP

- A. Paul says, “*Do not be deceived: Bad company corrupts good morals*” (1 Corinthians 15:33). This, I believe, is something that is obvious to us all. If a wicked person is allowed to continue in fellowship, then others too, seeing there are no consequences to sin, will be emboldened to become lax in their attitude toward sin. How long will it be before the good morals of everyone in the whole church are corrupted?
- B. The other reason is actually for the good of the wicked person. Rather than being vengeful action, it is *disciplinary* action. The church is to take this action “*for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*” (1 Corinthians 5:5).
  1. The precise meaning of these clauses is very difficult to determine but, in spite of this, the main reason for such discipline is clear. This discipline is meted out in the hope that the man might repent and be restored to fellowship with God and with the saints and once again live in hope of eternal life.
  2. That this is so is seen Peter’s judgment upon Simon the sorcerer and in the fact of Paul’s joy over this man’s repentance (2 Corinthians 2:1-10).

#### IV. SOCIAL OSTRACISM

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY
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- A. In a previous letter, Paul had told the Corinthians not to associate with immoral people and, it seems, they misunderstood what he meant (5:9-10). In correcting this misunderstanding we see our individual responsibility in regards to one who has been disfellowshipped.
- A. Paul had told the Corinthians that they were not to associate with immoral people and they interpreted this to mean people in general, whether Christian or non-Christians. They should have realized he didn't mean that or it would mean they would have to leave the world (5:9-10).
- B. So Paul explains that he meant that one is not to associate with *"a so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater...not to even eat with such a one"* (5:11). This is social ostracism<sup>2</sup>.

#### Summary and Observations

1. The Bible never uses the word *fellowship* to refer to social recreational events. Scriptural fellowship refers to the higher spiritual sharing we experience through faith in God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and, secondarily, to describe contributions sent to preachers and needy saints.
2. Paul was shocked to hear of this case of immorality and dismayed at their complacency and their failure to act. But Paul did not say, *"Oh well, you should have done something about this when you first knew about it but it's too late now, so let's just forget about it."* Paul made an immediate judgment and expected them to act upon his instructions.
3. The church is to take action against the wicked person when the church is assembled. The person is then to be handed over to Satan or removed from among them. It must be made clear that such a person is no longer a member of the church and is no longer in fellowship with God or with the brethren. This necessarily involves a formal statement. This is the act of disfellowshipping. The following are very obvious points...
  - a. A person must be in fellowship with God and the brethren before they can be disfellowshipped.
  - b. You cannot disfellowship someone who is not a Christian.
4. The purpose of disfellowshipping an immoral person is to prevent them corrupting the good morals of other brethren, and for their own spiritual good; it is hoped that such a person will reflect on his sin and repent.
5. It would make little sense to disfellowship someone and then carry on socializing with them, and so we must not associate or even eat with such a person.

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<sup>2</sup> To exclude or banish.

## **SAVED BY GRACE**

*Explaining Salvation by Grace Through Faith*

### **Introduction**

*“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” (Ephesians 2:8-10 NASB)*

1. People from a denominational background tend to have a distorted view of God’s grace. Typically, their view can be summarized...
  - a. We are saved wholly by the grace of God.
  - b. There is nothing we can do to earn our salvation.
2. It is a misconception of these terms that leads to errors on the part of the teacher who is attempting to show what one needs to do to be saved, and on the part of the student who stumbles at baptism as a requirement for the remission of sins.
  - a. Teachers make the mistake of trying to refute the idea that we are saved by grace, and then, distorting what James says, attempt to prove that baptism is a work by which we must be saved. This approach fails for obvious reasons.
  - b. Students make two mistakes:
    - 1) They fail to carry their logic through to its full conclusion, viz., if we are saved wholly by grace then all men would be saved because this is God’s desire (1 Timothy 2:3-4).
    - 2) They fail to consider the means by which we become beneficiaries of God’s grace.
3. My aim in this lesson is twofold:
  - a. To elucidate on how a person becomes a beneficiary of God’s grace.
  - b. To share with you an approach that succeeds in demonstrating:
    - 1) That baptism is not a work by which we earn our salvation.
    - 2) That baptism is, nevertheless, necessary for the remission of sins.

### **I. SAVED BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH**

- A. It is certainly true that we are saved by grace.

*“For by grace you have been saved...” (Ephesians 2:8 NASB)*

1. Consider the spiritual state of the unregenerate:
  - a. Hostile and engaged in evil deeds.

*“And although you were formerly **alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds**” (Colossians 1:21 NASB)*

*“So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, **in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness**” (Ephesians 4:17-19 NASB)*

b. All the unregenerate are alienated from God and *without hope*.

*“Remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, **having no hope and without God in the world**” (Ephesians 2:12 NASB)*

2. God was under no obligation to save us from this state but He acted from a motive of love:

*“For **while we were still helpless**, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that **while we were yet sinners**, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:6-8 NASB)*

*“But God, being rich in mercy, **because of His great love** with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)” (Ephesians 2:4-5 NASB)*

B. But we become the **beneficiaries** of grace **through faith**.

*“For by grace you have been saved through faith” (Ephesians 2:8 NASB)*

1. What is faith?

a. C. Caldwell says:

*“While grace is the cause of salvation, faith is the means through which the sinner avails himself of salvation. Salvation is conditioned on and received by faith...Saving faith is man’s expression of love for and trust in the Lord. It is conviction which expresses itself in obedient compliance and surrender to His will. **It [faith] is evidenced by active demonstration of firm belief**” (Truth Commentaries, Ephesians, Caldwell).*

b. James makes the same point:

*“What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, Go in peace, be warmed and be filled, and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. But someone may well say, You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, **AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS**, and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead” (James 2:14-26 NASB)*

2. Faith that saves us from our sins:

a. Paul has said that we are saved by grace **through faith**.

b. We have already seen that faith alone does not save. For, as James says, even the demons believe these facts! (Cp. James 2:19).

c. Believing the gospel, then, must produce **an obedient faith**:



*“The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming **obedient to the faith**”* (Acts 6:7 NASB)

*“But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, **you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed**”* (Romans 6:17 NASB)

3. How, then, do we obey the gospel?

- a. If the gospel can be obeyed, then it is necessarily implied that, the message that is preached consists of both revelation and commands; collectively called ‘The gospel’. Note the following scriptures:

- 1) The gospel consists of revelation...

*“But now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light **through the gospel**”* (2 Timothy 1:10 NASB)

- 2) The gospel consists of commands...

*“And He said to them, Go into all the world and **preach the gospel** to all creation. He who has **believed** [what is revealed] and has **been baptized** [a command] shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned”* (Mark 16:15-16 NASB)

*“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, **baptizing them** in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all that I commanded you**; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age”* (Matthew 28:18-20 NASB)

- b. Jesus said, “Whoever believes [the gospel] and is immersed shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). The book of Acts includes several examples of the preaching of the gospel and the initial obedience rendered that concord with the command of Jesus:

- 1) Acts 8:25-40 – Philip preached Jesus to the eunuch and he believed. It is evident that ‘Preaching Jesus’ **includes the command to be baptized** because the eunuch asks, “Look, here is water; what prevent me from being baptized?” (v. 36).
- 2) Acts 10:1-48; 11:1-18 – Cornelius and his household came to believe and then Peter **commanded them to be baptized**.

- c. There are other examples but these are sufficient to show that, after hearing the gospel an initial obedience followed almost immediately. They heard the gospel and obeyed. **Baptism is a response to an instruction or command that is included when ‘preaching Jesus’.**

4. When a person hears the gospel (the revelation and the instruction) and obeys it, God will save that person:

- a. Faith and obedience leads to salvation:

*“He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned”* (Mark 16:16 NASB)

- b. Paul’s teaching agrees:

*“He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, **by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit**”* (Titus 3:5 NASB)

- 1) Paul says that God saved us by:

- a) The “washing of regeneration”. This is baptism.

- b) Renewing by the Holy Spirit. *“The Holy Spirit effects renewal by bringing a person to faith and repentance through the preaching of the gospel”*

Note: Jesus mentions these same two elements:

*“Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is **born of water and [born of] the Spirit** he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5 NASB)*

- 2) Paul is essentially saying we are saved by God’s mercy by baptism and the preaching of the gospel. Did he consider baptism as a work? NO, for he says at the beginning of the verse, *“He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness”*. And this agrees with Jesus’ words that even when we have done all that we have been commanded, we are still to regard ourselves as unworthy servants (Luke 17:10). There are many things that Jesus commands but none are considered works by which we can earn salvation. Nevertheless, **we will be lost if we do not obey Him** because:

*“And being made perfect, **He became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him**” (Hebrews 5:9 KJV)*

## **II. SAVED BY GRACE THROUGH OBEDIENT FAITH**

- A. Despite all that we have said, there may still be those who grapple with the concept that we are saved by grace through obedient faith. Here, then, are two examples that demonstrate this concept. Both these examples concern “salvation” from physical ailments but the principle is true concerning our salvation from sin. The following examples have been deliberately chosen because both involve water!

### 1. Read 2 Kings 5:1-14.

- a. Naaman was the captain of the army of the king of Aram, a great man and highly respected. But he had leprosy (2 Kings 5:1).
- b. Hearing that there was a prophet in Israel who might cure him, he received permission from his master to go there and seek out the prophet (2 Kings 5:2-5).
- c. So Naaman came to the house of Elisha and he was instructed to, *“Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh will be restored to you and you will be clean”* (2 Kings 5:9-11).
- d. But having received this simple instruction, Naaman became angry and refused because, he said, *“Behold, I thought, he will surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper”* (2 Kings 5:11).
- e. Naaman would have returned home but for his servants who persuaded him saying, *“My father, had the prophet told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, ‘Wash, and be clean’?”* (2 Kings 5:13).
- f. Having listened to his servants, Naaman went down and dipped himself in the river seven times and was healed of his leprosy (2 Kings 5:14).

Everyone would agree that it was God who healed Naaman of his leprosy (see 2 Kings 5:15). But was Naaman healed by the grace of God or did Naaman earn his healing by obeying the instruction to dip himself seven times in the river Jordan? Any intelligent student will perceive that Naaman was healed by the grace of God. We could say that, **Naaman was ‘saved by grace through faith’**.

### 2. Read John 9:1-33.

- a. Jesus came to a man who had been blind since birth.
- b. He anointed the man’s eyes with clay and told him to, *“Go, wash in the pool of Siloam”*.

c. When the man washed in the pool his sight was restored.

Everyone would agree that it was God who healed the blind man. But was he healed by the grace of God or did he earn his healing by obeying the instruction to wash himself in the pool of Siloam? Any intelligent student will perceive that this man was healed by the grace of God. We could say that, **the blind man was 'saved by grace through faith'**.

B. There are many other examples of healings, deliverances, and victories that can all be attributed to the grace of God. But we must understand (speaking now of our salvation from sin)...

1. We are saved by grace but this grace comes through obedient faith.

2. To say that any act of obedience is a work by which we earn salvation is contrary to the scriptures:

*"So you too, when you have done all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done'" (Luke 17:10 NASB)*

3. Jesus said that the one who believes and is baptized shall be saved (Mark 16:16), this we believe and teach.

### III. THE OBEDIENCE BY WHICH WE BECOME BENEFICIARIES OF GOD'S GRACE

A. Paul says that we are God's workmanship, **created** in Christ Jesus for good works (Ephesians 2:10a).

1. Physically we are the creation of God (Psalms 100:3). However, it is our spiritual creation in Christ Jesus that is in view here.

*"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new creation**; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17 NASB)*

2. If one is a new creation then he must be **in Christ**, and only those in Christ are **saved** (Acts 4:12; 2 Thessalonians 2:10).

*"For God has not destined us for wrath, but for **obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ**" (1 Thessalonians 5:9 NASB)*

*"And that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to **salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus**" (2 Timothy 3:15 NASB)*

B. All spiritual blessings are **in Christ** (Ephesians 1:3), and this includes our salvation by grace:

*"**In Him** we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7 NASB)*

1. It is essential to see in this verse that, it is **in Christ** that we are saved by the blood of Christ.

2. Note too, it is **in Him** that we have redemption **according to the riches of God's grace**, i.e., only those **in Christ** are the beneficiaries of God's grace.

C. It is in Christ that we become beneficiaries of God's grace; it is in Christ that we are said to be a new creation; and it is in Christ that we have salvation. It is essential, then, that we ensure that we are in Christ.

1. The following verses demonstrate:

a. We get into Christ by being baptized into Christ:

*"For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Galatians 3:27; cp. Romans 6:3 NASB)*

b. We become a new creation when we are baptized into Christ:

*“Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4 NASB)*

*“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (2 Corinthians 5:17 NASB)*

c. We are saved from our sins by God’s grace and mercy by being baptized:

*“He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5 NASB)*

2. This is in perfect accord with other passages that refer to baptism (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:20-21).

## Summary

1. In this lesson we have demonstrated that:

- a. We are saved by the grace of God.
- b. We become beneficiaries of this salvation by grace through faith.
- c. Only faith expressing itself through obedience to the commandments of God is valid. Faith alone cannot save.
- d. When the gospel was preached, there was **an initial obedience to the gospel**. This necessarily infers that the message preached contained revelation and instruction. Examples of conversions in the book of Acts demonstrate the link between faith and obedience.
- e. It is this faith and obedience that leads to salvation. Baptism is associated with both obedience and salvation. Paul denies that baptism is a work (Titus 3:5) but is, nevertheless, necessary.
- f. 2 Kings 5:1-14; John 9:1-33. We become beneficiaries of God’s grace through obedient faith. Note how both examples require a washing with water.
- g. All spiritual blessings are in Christ, especially that we are created anew in Him, saved by grace in Him. We get into Christ through baptism and it is also by being baptized that we are created anew, and are saved by the grace of God.

2. We have been saved by grace and created in Christ Jesus for a purpose – a holy life (Ephesians 2:10).

## Conclusion

1. Many people from a denominational background hold the view that we are saved wholly by the grace of God.
  - a. But they fail to carry this concept through to its logical conclusion: if we are saved wholly by grace then, (i) faith would not be necessary, (ii) all men would be saved (no one would be lost).
  - b. They ignore or have failed to understand that we become beneficiaries of God’s grace through faith.
2. Personally, I have found that the approach presented in this lesson always gets the point across.
3. I hope we have come to understand how we are saved by grace through faith, and I hope you will find the approach presented in this lesson as useful and successful as I have done in my studies with people who hold to an erroneous view of salvation.

## SAVED BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

### Introduction

1. Many people teach that baptism is not for the remission of sins. It is believed that baptism is an outward sign of an inner grace. Those who insist that baptism is for the remission of sins are accused of believing in salvation by works. This is said so often and so loudly that many people believe it.
2. The aim of this study is to demonstrate that a person is saved by God's mercy and grace at the point of their obedience to the gospel.

### I. THE GOSPEL - GOD'S POWER TO SAVE

- A. If we desire to be saved, it is essential to realize that the power to save will not be found in anything we experience or in anything written by uninspired men. God's power to save is contained in the gospel.

*"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek"* (Romans 1:16 NASB)

1. The essential core of the gospel is outlined by Paul in his letter to the Corinthians:

*"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that **Christ died for our sins** according to the Scriptures, and that **He was buried**, and that **He was raised on the third day** according to the Scriptures"* (1 Corinthians 15:3-4 NASB)

2. Hearing the gospel is man's only hope of being saved, and this is why it is so essential that churches and individuals make preaching the gospel their top priority:

*"For whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved. How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!"* (Romans 10:13-15 NASB)

Paul said of the gospel, "...It is the power of God for salvation" (Romans 1:16). This is why Jesus commissioned the apostles to preach the gospel to the whole world:

*"And He said to them, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned"* (Mark 16:15-16)

- a. It is essential to call upon the name of the Lord to be saved.
- b. It is impossible to do so unless they hear about the Lord and believe on Him (Romans 10:17).
- c. It is impossible to hear the gospel unless someone preaches it to them. Please note carefully Paul's question, "How will they hear without a preacher?" The gospel, God's power to save, is not made known to us through any direct action of the Holy Spirit but only through the preaching of the gospel.

- B. It is essential to preach the gospel.

1. Man's spiritual state before hearing the gospel:

- a. Without having heard the gospel man is spiritually dead in his sins:

*"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest"* (Ephesians 2:1-3 NASB)

#### WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

"And, pray tell, what is the gospel? In a word, the gospel is the good news of salvation from the wrath of God due to man's sin, a salvation made possible through the death of Christ, and therefore pertaining (as Paul himself summarized it) to the death of Christ according to the scriptures, his burial, and his resurrection on the third day, according to the scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3,4). By extension, this gospel of Christ is the sum total of divine revelation in the sacred scriptures, that is, the Bible, and is composed of: (1) facts to be believed; (2) commandments to be obeyed; and (3) promises to be accepted. It is a gospel which must be received as the word of God (Acts 17:11), a gospel which must be believed (as stated in this verse); and it is a gospel that must be obeyed (2 Thessalonians 1:8)" (Coffman).

- b. The Scriptures make it clear that there are none who are saved apart from hearing the gospel because every accountable person has sinned:

*“Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins” (Ecclesiastes 7:20 NASB)*

*“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23 NASB)*

2. It is because all men are lost that there is a great urgency to preach the gospel. This is why Jesus commissioned the apostles to:

*“... Go into the entire world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been immersed shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned” (Mark 16:15-16 NASB).*

- C. Now let us look at some statements that confirm the truth that it is the gospel that is God’s power to save:

1. Peter says that we were begotten by God through the gospel.

- a. God has caused us to be born again:

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3 NASB).*



- b. We were born again through the gospel:

*“For you have been **born again** not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. For, all flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. the grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the word of the lord endures forever. And this is the word which was preached to you” (1 Peter 1:23-25 NASB)*

2. James says that God brought us forth through the gospel:

*“In the exercise of His will He **brought us forth** by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures” (James 1:18 NASB)*

## II. MAN’S RESPONSE TO THE GOSPEL

- A. When we hear the gospel, are we saved whether we believe it or not? Anyone acquainted with the scriptures will say, *“No, we have to believe the gospel!”*

1. That we must believe the gospel is obvious but here are a number of scriptures that show that belief or faith is essential to our salvation:

**From Where Does Faith Come?**  
*“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17)*

- a. It is impossible to please God without faith:

*“And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6 NASB)*

- b. Those who believe the gospel will be saved but those who disbelieve the gospel will be condemned:

*“And He said to them, Go into the entire world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned” (Mark 16:15-16 NASB)*

- c. A person who believes the gospel will be saved:

*“They said, Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household” (Acts 16:31 NASB)*

d. If we believe in our hearts that God raised Jesus from the dead, we will be saved:

*“That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9 NASB)*

e. It pleased God to save those who believe the gospel:

*“For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe” (1 Corinthians 1:21 NASB)*

f. Only those who believe will receive eternal life:

*“When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed” (Acts 13:48 NASB)*

2. What is obtained through faith?

a. Our hearts are cleansed:

*“And He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:9 NASB)*

b. We are sanctified:

*“To open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.” (Acts 26:18 NASB)*

c. We are made righteous:

*“And may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith” (Philippians 3:9 NASB)*

*“Even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction” (Romans 3:22 NASB)*

d. We are justified:

*“For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law” (Romans 3:28 NASB)*

e. We are saved by the grace of God when we believe:

*“For by grace you have been saved through the faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8 NASB)*

B. We are also required to obey the gospel!

*“However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our report?” (Romans 10:16 NASB)*

1. The gospel is the good news that that “... Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4 NASB). It is this gospel we are required to obey.

a. The apostles were sent out to preach the gospel to bring about obedience to the gospel:

*“Through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake” (Romans 1:5 NASB)*

**Jesus Is The Source Of Salvation  
To All Those Who Obey Him**

*“And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation” (Hebrews 5:9)*

*“But now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith” (Romans 16:26 NASB)*

b. Many did obey the gospel:

*“Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls through the Spirit for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart” (1 Peter 1:22 NASB)*

*“The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7 NASB)*

c. What is to become of those who do not obey the gospel?

*“For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (1 Peter 4:17 NASB)*

*“Dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (2 Thessalonians 1:8 NASB)*

2. How then do we obey the gospel?

*“But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that **form** of teaching to which you were committed” (Romans 6:17 NASB)*



a. The essential gospel is Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:3-4 NASB). How, then, can we obey this gospel? Paul explains how we obey the gospel...

*“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him” (Romans 6:1-9 NASB)*



b. It is by being baptized that we obey the gospel. This is in harmony with Jesus’ directive to the apostles:

*“And He said to them, Go into the entire world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned” (Mark 16:15-16 NASB)*

C. Why are we saved when we have believed and been baptized?

1. It is the blood of Jesus that washes away our sins:



*“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7 NASB)*

*“But if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7 NASB)*

**Naaman Cleansed by God’s Grace**

Naaman had to believe and be baptised to be cleansed of his leprosy. He was not baptised because he was already healed but to be healed. God’s grace was extended to him at the point of his obedience.

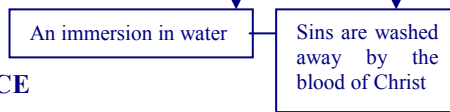
2. When does the blood of Jesus wash away our sins?

- a. It is at the point of our obedience that the blood of Jesus washes away our sins.

*“Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? Peter said to them, Repent, and each of you be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:37-38 NASB)*

- b. This is clearly seen in Paul’s conversion:

*“Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name” (Acts 22:16 NASB)*



**III. SAVE BY MERCY AND GRACE**

- A. There are some who object to baptism saying, *“If you have to be baptised, then you are saved by works, not grace.”* Being baptised is something we have to do and is a work in that sense. But it is certainly not a work whereby we *earn* our salvation. Consider these two passages and answer the questions:

1. Naaman healed of leprosy.

*“Now Naaman, captain of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man with his master, and highly respected, because by him the LORD had given victory to Aram. The man was also a valiant warrior, but he was a leper. Now the Arameans had gone out in bands and had taken captive a little girl from the land of Israel; and she waited on Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, I wish that my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! Then he would cure him of his leprosy. Naaman went in and told his master, saying, Thus and thus spoke the girl who is from the land of Israel. Then the king of Aram said, Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel. He departed and took with him ten talents of silver and six thousand shekels of gold and ten changes of clothes. He brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, And now as this letter comes to you, behold, I have sent Naaman my servant to you, that you may cure him of his leprosy. When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man is sending word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? But consider now, and see how he is seeking a quarrel against me. It happened when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, that he sent word to the king, saying, Why have you torn your clothes? Now let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel. So Naaman came with his horses and his chariots and stood at the doorway of the house of Elisha. Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh will be restored to you and you will be clean. But Naaman was furious and went away and said, Behold, I thought, 'He will surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper.' Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage. Then his servants came near and spoke to him and said, My father, had the prophet told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean'? So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child and he was clean” (2 Kings 5:1-14 NASB)*

- a. Notice how Naaman becomes furious and went away at the instruction to baptise himself to be cleansed of his physical disease. How can water wash away leprosy? And wouldn't Naaman be earning his salvation from leprosy? No, the whole idea is totally absurd.
- b. Fortunately for Naaman, his servants persuaded him to obey God's commandment and he was cleansed of his leprosy. Notice how his servants imply that be baptised is not some great thing. Baptism is not a great thing that can possible earn one's cleansing from physical or spiritual disease.

**c. Did Naaman earn his healing from leprosy or was he healed by the grace of God?**

2. A blind man healed.

*"As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind? Jesus answered, It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him. We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world. When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes, and said to him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which is translated, Sent). So he went away and washed, and came back seeing. Therefore the neighbors, and those who previously saw him as a beggar, were saying, Is not this the one who used to sit and beg? Others were saying, This is he, still others were saying, No, but he is like him. He kept saying, I am the one. So they were saying to him, How then were your eyes opened? He answered, The man who is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash'; so I went away and washed, and I received sight" (John 9:1-11 NASB)*

- a. After applying clay to his eyes, Jesus instructed the blind man to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. You will notice that this man did not become furious and go away in a rage. Rather, he went immediately and washed and received his sight. Notice also, the man acknowledges his own actions – "so I went away and washed" – but he attributed his healing to Jesus (John 9:30).

**b. Did the blind man earn his healing or was he healed by the grace of God?**

3. It would be wrong to accuse Naaman or the blind man of earning their healings. It is wrong to accuse those who have been baptised for the forgiveness of their sins of earning their salvation. In all cases, one is simply obeying the word of God to receive the grace of God.

- B. If we can understand that simple obedience to the word of God to receive mercy and grace is not, by any stretch of the imagination, earning salvation, then we can understand that the command to be baptised for the remission of sins is not earning one's salvation.

1. We are saved by God's mercy.

*"For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:3-7 NASB)*

- a. Paul says that God saves us according to His mercy in the first part of verse 3. Then he says how this is achieved in the second part of verse 3 – "by the washing of regeneration." The "washing of regeneration" is a reference to baptism. We see, then, that Christians have been born of water and the Spirit. This is in harmony with Jesus statement that, "... unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5 NASB).

- b. From the past tense perspective, a person who has been baptised has been saved by the mercy of God. From a future tense perspective, a person who is baptised will be saved by God's mercy. You can see the connection in the following verses also:

*"Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11 NASB)*

*"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word" (Ephesians 5:25-26 NASB)*

2. Titus 3:3-7 teaches us that God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ. And these are the very words of Scripture:

*"But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)" (Ephesians 2:4-5 NASB).*

- a. How did God show this mercy? *"By the washing of regeneration"* (Titus 3:5). This is equivalent to being *"made alive"* (Ephesians 2:5). But notice how Paul says, *"by grace you have been saved"* (Ephesians 2:5).

- b. God's grace is extended to us at the same time as His mercy – through the washing of regeneration.

C. Paul's statement that we are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8) is consistent with all that Paul has said.

1. Many people interpret this verse to mean that we are saved by grace *only* through faith *only*. But the word *"only"* would exclude everything else, including faith. If we are saved by faith *only*, then grace would be excluded. While it is true that we are saved by grace and saved by faith, it is also true that the word *"only"* does not appear anywhere in the text.

2. Most of our translations read, *"... saved through faith."* But the article *"the"* should be inserted so that it reads, *"... saved through the faith."* *"The faith"* refers to the gospel. Here is a paraphrase...

*"It is by the grace of God that you have been saved through the gospel; and this gospel did not originate with you, the gospel is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8 NASB)*

3. The following is from Coffman's commentary on Ephesians 2:8-9:

Verses 8, 9

For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works that no man should glory.

The jubilation with which some hail this text would be much more restrained by a little careful study of it. There is no release in this text from obligations God has bound upon sinners who desire to be saved. It cannot mean, nor does it say, that *"faith only"* saves sinners, and that even that faith is supplied by the Lord, not by sinners, being *"not of yourselves"*! Because of arrogant and persistent error which people strive to fasten upon this beautiful passage a careful study of it is included here.

The error of people in their interpretations of this passage is evident in such comments as *"our salvation... is appropriated by us through faith alone."* *"Here is the basis for the watchword of Reformation theology: solo gratia, sola fide, soli Deo gloria (by grace alone, through faith alone, to God alone be glory)."* If salvation is by grace alone, it cannot, at the same time be of faith; and if it is of faith alone, it cannot, at the same time, be of grace also. Could a man be married to Ruth alone and to Ann alone at the same time? Thus, the *"watchword"* is a contradiction on its face; and, besides that, the so-called *"Scriptures"* grace only and faith only, are illegitimate Scriptures, being nowhere mentioned in the word of God, with the lone exception of James 2:24, where that sacred writer says *"we are not justified by faith alone."*

But what does the text say?

By grace have ye been saved through faith...

Some of the critical scholars declare the past perfect tense here to be un-Pauline; but, while it is true that Paul often spoke of salvation as a continuing process (as in 1 Corinthians 1:18; 1:18 and Romans 5:9), he was here speaking of being “*saved*” in the sense of having obeyed the gospel. Jesus said, “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*” (Mark 16:16); and Paul was here addressing people who had believed and had been “*raised with Christ*” by baptism into newness of life (Ephesians 2:6); and, therefore, in the sense of Paul's thought here, it was mandatory to use the past perfect. The primary salvation accomplished when a sinner believes and obeys the gospel is complete, final and perfect, as regards his old sins. The use of the past perfect makes it certain that that primary salvation was referred to here.

By grace...

The connotations of this word as used in the New Testament include the principles: (1) of human beings (all of them) being unworthy of the salvation God provides; (2) of the impossibility of any man's meriting or earning salvation, even if he had a million lives to live; and (3) that salvation bestowed upon people originated in the heart of God and that it flows out from God to people, being from God and of God alone. It is clear then that God's grace is to all people, for all people alike, and that it is available for every person who was ever born on earth (Titus 2:11).

If then, salvation is by grace only, all people are already saved; for God's grace has appeared to all. Christ himself, however, taught that all people will not be saved; and the only intelligent reconciliation of those twin facts lies in accepting the premise of human salvation's being conditional, that is, made to turn upon human acceptance of it through human compliance with the conditions upon which God through Christ and the apostles promised it. The Reformation heresy was simply that of removing or negating all conditions of salvation except the sinner's subjective trust/faith, thus proclaiming what was called “*salvation through faith alone*.” Such preconditions of salvation as repentance, confession, baptism and the acceptance by the convert of his Christian obligations - all these are declared to be “*works*” and therefore unnecessary to be performed as conditions of salvation, and this despite the truth that none of them is a “*work*” at all, except in the sense that the sinner's faith is also a “*work*.”

Through faith...

The most likely meaning of this phrase, as attested by the Emphatic Diaglott rendition of it, is “*through the faith*,” that is, “*through the Christian faith*,” or the Christian religion. One thing is absolutely certain: this cannot mean the subjective trust/faith of sinners. Three reasons deny such an interpretation: (1) the Diaglott rendition is supported by the Vatican manuscript which has the article (the); and furthermore the inclusion of it is often understood anyway so that the absence of the article in some manuscripts does not deny it; and, in all probability, the translators would have supplied it (as permitted) if they had properly understood the meaning of it. (2) The qualifying clause next given, “*and that not of yourselves*,” absolutely denies that the faith of sinners is in view here. See under the clause below. (3) Recent extensive studies by George Howard of the University of Georgia disclose that the usual meaning of “*faith*” in the New Testament is not sinner's trust/faith at all, but fidelity. “*Faith*” as used in the vocabulary of current theological jargon to mean sinner's trust/faith experienced inwardly and subjectively is not a New Testament concept at all. Also, it is impossible to reconcile such a perverted understanding of the word “*faith*” in this clause, because of the qualifier thundered in the next clause.

And that not of yourselves...

The placement of this modifying clause applies it to faith, no matter whether the word for “*that*” is rendered as here, or “*this*” as it should be rendered Both the Nestle Greek Interlinear Greek-English Testament and the Emphatic Diaglott translate the word “*this*” making it absolutely mandatory to understand “*the faith*” as being that which is “*not of yourselves*.” Those who have already interpreted “*faith*” here as sinner's faith, however, are under the necessity of removing the meaning of this qualifier that so effectively denies their interpretation; and they have labored prodigiously in a losing cause:

MacKnight injected a word foreign to the Greek text, mistranslating the verse thus, “*By grace are ye saved through faith, and this affair is not of yourselves, etc.*” He added, “*I have supplied this affair (making it mean) your salvation through faith is not of yourselves!*” Well, that's one way to deal with a troublesome text! Others have sought to base their objections to the obvious meaning upon grammatical considerations.

Robertson made faith in this passage sinner's faith, saying, “*Grace is God's part, faith is ours*,” basing his conclusion on the fact of the adverb, this (mistranslated that in the English Revised Version (1885)) being of neuter gender, and thus not corresponding to the word faith which is feminine gender, flatly affirming that there is no reference at all in this place to faith as used in that same clause, but referring to salvation as used in the clause before! Lenski called this “*careless*,” and then used the same argument himself! The simple truth is that no rule of grammar requires an adverbial phrase to agree in gender with its antecedent. This writer has long insisted that it is grammar, not Greek, that foils the work of many interpreters. F. F. Bruce exposed the poverty of this argument from grammar thus:

The fact that the Greek word for faith ([pistis]) is feminine, while the pronoun that is neuter here, is no barrier to regarding faith as the gift of God. The phrase “*and that*” is really adverbial! A similar usage by Paul is in Philp. 1:28 thus:

A token... of your salvation, and that from God; and in that reference that is similarly neuter, while both token ([Greek: endeixis]) and salvation ([Greek: soteria]) are feminine.

Hendriksen and others, being aware of the total failure of the argument from grammar to sustain their thesis, support still another theory, credited to A. Kuyper, St., which makes "faith" in this verse to mean "faith exercised by the sinner" (which is the essential error in all of these theories) "is not of yourselves but is God's gift." This, of course, is the prize winner, being, without doubt, the most unbelievable of all these false explanations. If allowed, it would make the New Testament say that people are saved by faith, but there is no need really for them to believe, since God himself gives the faith he requires! The human theories would then have to be revised to teach that people are saved by faith only; but people do not even have to believe, for God gives them faith! This to be sure would remove all conditions without exception, making salvation of all men to depend utterly upon the action of God. The conception that "faith" in this place means some kind of subjective (inward) faith exercised by a person must really be dear to its adherents who will subscribe to any theory as ridiculous, unscriptural and unbelievable as this.

There is only one possible way of understanding "faith" as the subjective response of a person (in this passage), and that is by referring it to the faith of Jesus Christ. If this is done, of course, then the availability of Christ's faith as the basis of human redemption is indeed the gift of God. Such an interpretation would have the grace of not contradicting the Scriptures; but, in all likelihood, the simple meaning here is "the Christian faith," which came about as a gift of God to mankind, and not as a result of any human contribution whatever. See more on "faith of Christ" under Gal. 2:16, 20.

Not of works, that no man should glory...

This refers to works of the Law of Moses, to nothing else; and the expression itself had become a kind of proverb in Paul's writings during those long years of his struggles against Judaizing teachers. It is simply outrageous that a scholar will ignore this and apply this verse (9) to mean that "God rejects every work of man." Paul never taught anything like that. He said "work out your own salvation" (Philippians 2:12), and he also praised the Thessalonians for their "work of faith" (1 Thessalonians 1:3). If God rejects "every work of man," Paul never heard of it! Alfred Barry caught the true meaning here perfectly, thus:

In this verse we have the echo of the past Judaizing controversy; it sums up briefly the whole argument of Rom. 3:27 to Rom. 4:25. There is another reminiscence, but more distinct and detached in Philp. 3:2-9.

That no man should glory...

This intention of the Father absolutely removes the primary steps of Christian obedience from any possibility of inclusion in the words "not of works," because there is nothing in any of the steps of primary obedience which by even the wildest stretch of human imagination can be construed as "glorying," or providing any basis for human glorying.

Faith...

Not in one's self, but in the crucified Savior - any ground of glorying here?

Repentance...

Entails godly sorrow for sins committed, issuing in a reversal of the human will - any ground of glorying?

Confession...

Is not a confession of how saved one is, or what wonders the Lord has done for one, but of faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God - any ground of glorying here?

Baptism into Christ...

In this act, which is the sinner's only in the sense that he is commanded to "have himself baptized," he is passive, silent, meek, helpless; with hands folded over a penitent heart, he permits his entire person to be buried in baptism, this action showing that he does not trust himself for salvation any more than he would trust a dead body, fit only to be buried - any ground of glorying here? NO! NO! NO! Those who are glorying in this generation are not those who are obeying the gospel in order to be saved, as the Scriptures teach; but, on the other hand, they are those who are screaming to high heaven that they are being saved in a better way, by doing nothing except "believing" or "trusting." They are glorying in being saved without "obeying the gospel"; and they are glorying against those whom they denounce and decry as "legalists" because they do render obedience to these primary commandments and strive to teach all people to do likewise.

This writer has never known a Christian throughout many years of preaching and teaching God's word who ever gloried in rendering primary obedience to the gospel, or who for one moment believed such obedient actions on his part "earned" salvation, or "placed God under obligations to him," or put him in a position of "deserving" or "meriting" eternal redemption. The implied (or stated) slander of Christians who believe that Christ meant what he said when he declared that "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" is not merely arrogant and dishonest, but it is also without love. Since the groups who believe and practice obedience to the primary conditions of redemption most certainly include "faith in Christ Jesus" as being the very first of those preconditions, are such believers then disqualified as Christians because they also obeyed the Lord's word in those areas? Such is the love that people have for their theory that they will denominate anyone who denies it as a Pharisee, a legalist and a truster in works. This evident hatred of those who accept for themselves and teach others the "obedience of faith" betrays the true allegiance and sonship of them that manifest it. They are the true Pharisees of our day. "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees."

#### IV. JUSTIFIED BY WORKS

A. How does one receive the forgiveness of sins? Note the following scriptures:

*“Peter said to them, Repent, and each of you be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38 NASB)*

*“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9 NASB)*

1. In a discussion with a Baptist friend about receiving the forgiveness of sins, I said that one needs to be baptised for the remission of sins. My friend said that baptism was merely the outward sign and referred me to 1 John 1:9 as stating the point at which sins were forgiven.
2. But I pointed out that Peter is addressing sinners and John is writing to Christians. Sinners are forgiven of their sins through repentance and baptism. Christians can obtain forgiveness through confession of their sins.

B. Are we saved by works? Note the following scriptures:

*“For by grace you have been saved through the faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8 NASB)*

*“You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone” (James 2:24 NASB)*

1. Paul makes it quite clear that we were saved by grace through faith.
2. James, though, is not writing to sinners and explaining when they were saved, is he? He is writing to Christians and expounding on justification. He is not explaining how a man *was* made righteous but how a man *is shown* to be righteous.

**“Is justified** (dikaoutai). Present passive indicative of dikaio, here not ‘is made righteous,’ but ‘is shown to be righteous.’ James is discussing the proof of faith, not the initial act of being set right with God (Paul's idea in Rom\_4:1-10)” (RWP).

#### Conclusion

1. The gospel is God's power to save... it is God's *only* power to save. This being so, it is essential that churches and individuals fulfil their responsibilities in preaching the gospel to the lost.
2. The essential gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. These are the core elements of the gospel we preach. How we present the gospel and the degree to which we expand upon any particular point will depend on the person's knowledge and understanding of God and the scriptures. You can learn a lot about the presentation of the gospel to various individuals and different groups by studying the sermons in the New Testament.
3. The gospel contains both revelation and instruction and requires a response on the part of the hearer. It must be both believed and obeyed. It is through a person's faith and obedience to the gospel that he is saved by the mercy and grace of God. A sincere believer will continue in his obedience to the faith. It is by continued obedience that a man is shown to be righteous. A person's faith is manifested through his works. Without this manifestation of works, there is no faith of any value.

## SEEDS OF DIVISION

*1 Corinthians 1:10-3:5*

### Introduction

1. In this lesson we will be considering the seeds of division that were being sown in the Corinthian congregation.
  - a. What was the cause of these divisive contentions?
  - b. What does Paul suggest would quash these undesirable seeds?
  - c. How does 1:18-2:16 fit into this discussion?
2. The symptoms of their problem were these: they were not of the same mind and judgment, they were speaking different things, and there were contentions among them; and there was the danger of divisions ensuing.

### I. SECTARIANISM IS SIN

#### A. A personal plea. *"Now I beseech you, brethren..."*

1. Paul would rather beseech or plead [3870] with his brethren in all things, rather than be harsh and cold. This is what Paul taught (Galatians 6:1-2) and this is what he does in all his epistles (Romans 15:30; 16:17; 1 Corinthians 4:6; 16:15; 2 Corinthians 2:8; 6:1; 10:1; Galatians 4:12; Ephesians 4:1; Philippians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 4:1,10; 2 Thessalonians 2:1; Philemon 9; Hebrews 13:22).
2. Paul had a genuine love and concern for all brethren (Romans 10:1; 1 Corinthians 9:19-22; 10:32-33; 2 Corinthians 2:17).
3. Paul recognized this same concern in other (Philippians 2:19-20).

#### B. Jesus the Way. *"...By the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"*

1. The name of Christ has been mentioned ten times in these first ten verses? Perhaps to remind them of the unity that is in Christ, and so admonishing them concerning the factions among them (Galatians 3:26-29).
2. Pointing to Jesus, who is the source of all their blessings (Ephesians 1:3).
3. Perhaps there is also a reminder to the Corinthians that Paul had authority to rebuke and command them (1 Corinthians 4:21).

#### C. A call to unity.

*"...That ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you" (1 Corinthians 1:10).*

1. This may have reference to the many issues raised in this epistle or it may have specific reference to the party slogan in 1:10. [Taking a brother to law, meat offered to idols, head coverings. Spiritual gifts, exalting men. These are some of the areas in which different things were being spoken].
2. The result of such diverse thoughts and opinions could end in divisions [4978] (Ephesians 4:1-6).

#### D. *"...But that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment"*.

1. The Corinthians are encouraged to be of the same mind, i.e., to have the same spiritual understanding especially in connection with the many questions that had been raised.
2. Such a spiritual understanding would lead them to the same spiritual judgments.

#### E. The party spirit.

1. As the Corinthians adhered to their party slogans, contentions between each arose (1 Corinthians 1:11b > 4:3-6).

F. Let us reason together.

1. The only Person who is worthy of following, the only One who is worthy of exaltation is Christ. Because it is He who was crucified for you (1 Corinthians 1:13).
2. The Corinthians should be loyal to Christ, since it was into His name they were baptized (1 Corinthians 1:13).
3. In view of these facts, their party slogans now seem a little immature. But such slogans are actually and offence against Christ.

## II. SECTARIANISM IS CARNAL (3:1-5)

A. The apostle shows them that such factions among them are carnal.

1. Paul says they are still babes not able to take meat (1 Corinthians 3:2).
2. They were still carnal, worldly, in their thinking and behavior (1 Corinthians 3:3).
3. The fact there were factions among them proves the above points (1 Corinthians 3:4).

B. One man should not be compared with or exalted above another, for all who labored among them, in whatever capacity, were merely the servants and instruments of God, by which they came to believe (1 Corinthians 3:5).

## III. HUMBLD BY GOD'S WISDOM (1:18-2:16)

A. How does this section fit in with the subject under discussion? [Read Proverbs 11:2].

B. The focus of the Corinthians has wandered from Christ to men. The apostle shows them again the true object of their focus - The Cross (1 Corinthians 1:18-25).

C. Consider your calling, according to the flesh, you have nothing to boast of...what man is able to boast before God? Therefore we ought only to glory in Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:26-31).

D. True wisdom cannot be found in the world but only in God's word (1 Corinthians 2:1-16). By looking to the world they had learnt only worldly values, they needed to return to God's word to learn spiritual values, which would keep pride in check.

## IV. CAUSES AND CURES

A. Pride is the cause of all their problems.

1. The proud Corinthians (1 Corinthians 4:6-10).
2. Proverbs links contentions with pride (Proverbs 13:10).
3. Pride - Carnal thinking/focusing - contentions - divisions.

B. Humility is the cure to their problems

1. *"Let no one seek his own, but each one the others well being"* (1 Corinthians 10:24).
2. Humility comes before honor (Proverbs 15:33).
3. Humility - Spiritual mindedness/focusing - peace - unity.

## Conclusion

1. The seeds of division are pride, worldly mindedness, and contention. Read through the relevant scriptures and you will see that this is so. And, considering the same scriptures, you will see that an injection of humility will lead to a cure.
2. As Christians let us remove every obstacle in the way of peace and unity (Read Ephesians 4:1-6).



## SEEKING THE LOST

### Introduction

1. In many parts of the world life is cheap, South Africa and Bosnia, to name only two. But even in the western world life is becoming increasingly cheaper. This view of human life can even be adopted by Christians and if we do accept it, then what value will we put on the soul of a man? Do we care that thousands die in sin each day?
2. We may have spoken to people in the past but without much success. Failing to convert and encountering only rejection, we become discouraged thinking that no one really cares, “*Besides*”, we might reason “*it is the preacher’s job, I don’t know what I can do and I haven’t got the time*”.
3. In this lesson we will examine...
  - a. The true value of a soul.
  - b. What is involved in preaching?
  - c. Are there those that care?
4. This will be followed by some practical suggestions to help us to seek the lost.

### I. THE VALUE OF THE HUMAN SOUL

- A. The value of every person is seen in the cross (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9-10).
- B. The price paid was Jesus' blood (paid up front) (1 Peter 1:18-19; Ephesians 2:1-6).
- C. The value of each soul seen in the parables: of the sheep (Luke 15:1-7), of the lost coin (Luke 15:8-10).

### II. THE POWER TO SAVE

- A. Who is to preach?
  1. One sent (a preacher) (Romans 10:14-15).
  2. All disciples (Acts 8:4; 15:35).
  3. Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:24-26).
- B. We are only responsible to preach the Word.
  1. Jesus' instruction to His disciples (Matthew 10:11-15; Luke 10:8-12; e.g. Acts 13:49-51).
  2. Personal faith is needed before conversion can take place (Hebrews 4:2).
- C. The power to save is not in us, but in the gospel (Romans 1:14-16; Ephesians 1:12-13; James 1:21).

### III. DOES ANYONE CARE?

- A. Only the Lord knows how many might be searching for the truth.
  1. Noah preached for years and found no one cared (1 Peter 3:20).
  2. Elijah thought none cared but the Lord told him there were yet seven thousand in Israel who did (1 Kings 19:13b-18).
- B. There will only be a few (Matthew 7:14; 22:14).
- C. Therefore we must search diligently.
  1. The parables of the lost sheep and lost coin show God's diligence (Luke 15:1-7; 8-10).

2. Illustration - One hundred thousand pound gold needle in a hay stack.

D. We must take every opportunity (Galatians 6:10) and trust in the providence of God. E.g. the Eunuch (Acts 8:26-40; Cornelius (Acts 10:1-48).

E. Rejoicing when one is saved (Luke 15:7).

#### **IV. PRACTICAL SUGGESTION**

A. Join in the door knocking efforts (Acts 5:42).

B. Speak to your relatives, friends, and neighbors (John 1:40-42; 44:46).

C. When you write, put a tract or something in with the note.

D. When you travel on London Transport, leave an introduction card on the seat.

E. Put a postcard in your local shop advertising the Bible course.

#### **Conclusion**

1. In the sight of God every soul is of great worth and this is how we ought to view every person also.

2. The soul who is searching for the truth is a rare thing and we see then that great effort must be made to find them, and if we trust in the providence of God we will. Whoever we teach let us remember that the power to save is in the gospel.

3. Finally, let us remember...

a. The Word we speak to others achieves its purpose, either saving or condemning (Luke 10:8-12).

b. Your labor in the Lord is not in vain, God remembers all that we do and will reward us accordingly (1 Corinthians 15:58; Hebrews 6:10).

## SELECTING A CHURCH

### *A Seekers Guide*

#### **Introduction**

1. It is very commendable that you wish to find a church where you can place your membership and join with others in worshipping God. Several things are demonstrated by such a desire:
  - a. It indicates that you have some understanding of Christianity. This may have come from teaching that you received at school, at home, at church (when younger), or it may be the result of reading the Bible yourself.
  - b. It indicates that you have a desire to fellowship with others of a like-mind for mutual encouragement and further edification in your faith.
  - c. It indicates a recognition on your part that not all churches are merely facsimiles of one another. The very fact that you wish to make a selection presupposes a variety from which to choose.
2. Please allow us to help you in your selection by asking you to consider the following points.

[Before we consider the criteria for selecting a church, we ask...]

#### **I. HAS THE LORD ADDED YOU TO HIS CHURCH?**

- A. The word 'church' is used in several senses in the New Testament but we will focus on just two:
  1. The word 'church' is used in a *universal* sense. The universal church is made up of all those who are saved, and it is the Lord Himself who adds people to His church:

*"...And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47)*
  2. The word 'church' is also used in a *local* sense. A local church consists of believes who meet for worship at a particular place. Paul and Barnabas were revisiting several cities in which they had formerly preached the gospel (Acts 14:21-22). Luke records...

*"And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed" (Acts 14:23)*

    - a. They ordained or appointed elders in every church. These were all local churches.
    - b. From the latter part of the verse, we see that these local churches were made up of those who believed on the Lord.
- B. So, before you consider selecting a local church at which to place your membership, it is essential to ensure that you have been added to the Lord's church. But how can a person know if he has been added to the Lord's church?
  1. Look with me once again at this verse...

*"...And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47)*

    - a. Who was the Lord adding to the church? *"...such as should be saved."*
    - b. Since it is only the saved that are added to the church, it is essential that we learn what one must do to be saved!
  2. So, what must you do to be saved? In the same chapter (Acts 2), this same question was asked by those who had just been convicted of nailing the Son of God to a tree:

*"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?"<sup>3</sup> (Acts 2:36-37)*

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<sup>3</sup> The Modern Amplified Version says, "Now when they heard this, they were convicted of their sin, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what must we do to be saved?"

- a. You will notice that, Peter did not tell these Jews to “*believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved*” (See Acts 16:31). This was because they already believed, which is evident because they were “*pricked in their heart*” when they heard the gospel message that Peter had presented (Acts 2:14-37).
- b. Though these Jews believed, they were yet lacking. Peter tells them what they need to do:

*“Then Peter said to them, Repent, and be immersed every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”*  
(Acts 2:38)

- 1) Though they believed, they needed to “*repent,*” or turn from their sins. To repent means to ‘change the mind,’ i.e., to change one’s mind about the course of life one has been leading to walk in another. Peter, then, called upon them to turn from their lives of sin and walk in the highway of righteousness.
- 2) Peter also tells them to “*be baptized for the remission of sins.*” The word “*baptized*” comes from the Greek word *baptizo* and denotes ‘an immersion in water’ (See Vines). They were told to be baptized or immersed in water for a specific purpose: “*for the remission of sin.*”

3. Peter’s answer to their question is not surprising, for Jesus had commissioned His disciples saying...

*“...Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned”* (Mark 16:15-16)

### Summary

1. The word ‘church’ is used in two senses: i) A universal sense which consists of all believers in every part of the world. ii) A local sense which consists of all believers that meet together in a particular place.
2. Before you even consider joining with a local church, it is essential to ensure that you have been added to the church (universal) by the Lord.
  - a. The Lord added to the church those who were being saved (Acts 2:47).
  - b. We are saved when we believe the gospel, repent of our sins, and are immersed in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16).

Have you been added to the Lord’s church? If you believe in Jesus with all your heart, if you are determined to live a life pleasing to God, and if you desire to be added to the Lord’s church then please contact me to arrange your immersion into Christ.

*“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin”* (Romans 6:4-6)

[Once you have been added to the (universal) church, you may now consider...]

## II. THE CRITERIA FOR SELECTING A LOCAL CHURCH

- A. Selecting a local church at which to place your membership is an important decision and, therefore, should be considered very carefully and prayerfully. There are several criteria that should be considered (please note: these are not listed in any specific order):

1. Is the church made up of Christians?

- a. You will remember that, to become a Christian, a person must hear the gospel (Romans 10:13-17), believe that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 16:31), confess with the mouth that Jesus is the Son of God (Romans 10:9), repent of sin (Acts 2:38), and be immersed for the remission of sin (Acts 22:16).
  - b. It is logical, then, to establish whether any church you have under consideration is made up of people who became Christians in the same way.
2. Is the church preaching the gospel?
- a. By “*the gospel*” we have in mind two specific things:
    - 1) Preaching the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

*“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:”*  
(1 Corinthians 15:1-4)
    - 2) Preaching what one must do to be saved (as outlined above).
  - b. The gospel is the only power of God to save (Romans 1:16) and to preach any “*other gospel*” is to meet with God’s displeasure:

*“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed”* (Galatians 1:8-9)
3. Does the church believe and respect the authority of the word of God?
- a. What we believe about the Bible will, obviously, affect what we believe and practice.
    - 1) Imagine if someone says, “*The Bible is not inspired of God.*”
    - 2) One who believes this will have no difficulty rejecting doctrines with which they do not agree.
  - b. The Bible writers claim inspiration for themselves and their writings:
    - 1) Paul says that what he wrote were the commandments of the Lord:

*“If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord”* (1 Corinthians 14:37)
    - 2) Peter, indirectly, refers to Paul’s letters as scripture:

*“And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction”* (2 Peter 3:15-16)
    - 3) Paul states that all scripture is inspired of God:

*“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”* (2 Timothy 3:16)
  - c. The Scriptures, then, are inspired of God and the only source of authority to which we must appeal to establish whether a teaching or practice is approved of God. Note...

1) We must have authority for all that we do:

*“And whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all **in the name of** [i.e., by the authority of] the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him” (Colossians 3:17)*

2) We must abide in the doctrine of Christ:

*“Whosoever transgresses, and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ, does not have God. He that abides in the doctrine of Christ, he has both the Father and the Son” (2 John 1:9)*

4. Is the church organized according to the Scriptures?

a. Reading through the New Testament, we can see how the church should be organized. During the apostolic age, the organization of the church looked like this...

1) Jesus, the head of the church (Ephesians 5:23).

2) The apostles (1 Corinthians 12:28)

3) Prophets (Ephesians 4:11)

4) Elders (1 Peter 5:1).

5) Deacons (Philippians 1:1).

6) Preachers (2 Timothy 4:5).

b. Jesus, of course, is still the head of the church. However, there are none today who qualify to be apostles (See Acts 1:17-23 for the qualifications of an apostle) or inspired prophets. It is also important to realize that, elders were also called pastors, shepherds, and bishops. These are not different offices but one and the same. This can be demonstrated quite easily (please read Acts 20:17-28). The whole of Paul's discourse is directed at the same group of men:

1) In verse 17, Paul calls for the elders.

2) In verse 28, this same group of men are told to, *“take heed... to the flock...”* The word *flock* is a reference to a flock of sheep and is, therefore, an implication that they were the shepherds or pastors of the flock. Note: it is an error to refer to a preacher as ‘pastor.’

3) Again, in verse 28, they are called overseers. The word *overseer* is from the same Greek word, *episkopos*, which is also translated ‘bishop.’

c. A church that is unscripturally organized is one that...

1) Has appointed both pastors, elders, and bishops as if they were three distinct offices.

2) Appoints men to offices that are man-made: priest, vicar, cardinal, arch-bishop, arch-deacon, father, pope, etc.

5. Does the church pattern its worship according to the Scriptures?

a. A superficial examination of the worship of churches will reveal similar forms of worship. Is there a church that does not include the following in its services?

1) The Lord's Supper or Communion.

2) Singing.

3) Prayers.

4) Preaching.

5) A collection.

b. However, a closer examination will reveal practices that are unscriptural:

1) The Scriptures teach that the Lord's Supper is to be observed each first day of the week (Acts 20:7). However, some churches have the Communion monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly, and annually. Some churches have the Communion on other days of the week besides Sundays.

2) There are two types of music: vocal and instrumental. The New Testament authorizes only vocal music (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). This may sound shocking, even ridiculous to some, but a serious study of this subject will show this to be the case. Note the following facts:

a) The New Testament nowhere authorizes the use of musical instruments.

b) The early church (for at least 600 years) did not use musical instruments.

"The Greek word psallo is applied among the Greeks of modern times exclusively to sacred music, which in the eastern church has never been any other than vocal, instrumental music being unknown in the church, as it was in the primitive church. Sir John Hawkings, following the Romish curiters in his erudite work on the history of music, makes Pope Vitalian, in A.D. 660, the first who introduced organs into churches. But students of ecclesiastical archaeology are generally agreed that instrumental music was not used in churches till a much later date; for Thomas Aquinas, A.D. 1250 has these..." (McClintock and Strong's Cyclopaedia)

"We have no real knowledge of the exact character of the music which formed a part of religious devotion of the Christian congregation. It was, however, purely vocal." (History of Music From the Christian Era to the Present Time, Dr. Frederick Louis Ritter)

c) Some of the early reformers concluded that musical instruments were unscriptural:

"Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps, and the restoration of the other shadows of the law" (John Calvin)

"I have no objection to instruments of music in our chapels, provided they are neither heard nor seen" (John Wesley)

"To those who have no real devotion or spirituality in them and whose animal nature flags under the oppression of church service, I think that instrumental music would be not only a desideratum, but an essential prerequisite to fire up their souls to even animal devotion. But I presume to all spiritually-minded Christians, such aids would be as a cow bell in a concert" (Alexander Campbell)

3) We must be careful that our prayers are not merely vain repetitions (Matthew 6:7). The prayers of some churches, though, are made up of nothing but vain repetitions!

4) Sermons should be based on the Bible (1 Peter 4:11; cp. 1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 4:2). In some churches, though, you hear a mixture of Bible references and opinions, and lectures on politics.

5) The collection is to be taken up on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:1-2) and is a freewill offering (2 Corinthians 9:6-7). Some churches, sad to say, are in the habit of taking up a collection every time the church doors are opened, regardless of the day of the week. Some churches even fix a percentage that one must give.

6. Is the church non-sectarian?

a. By *non-sectarian*, we mean, a church that...

1) Identifies itself by a scriptural description that gives glory to God.

- a) There are several scriptural terms we may use: 'Church of Christ' (Romans 16:16), 'Church of God' (1 Corinthians 1:2; Acts 20:28), 'Church of the Living God' (1 Timothy 3:15), 'Church of the Firstborn' (Hebrews 12:23). These are all scriptural descriptions and give glory to God. Note: individuals will call themselves "*Christians*" (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16). One cannot be a 'Baptist-Christian,' etc. The idea of a hyphenated Christian is absurd!
- b) However, to use descriptive terms such as, 'Baptist Church,' 'Methodist Church,' and 'St. Mary's Church,' do not give glory to God and merely highlight their sectarian nature. Note: individual members are "*forced*" to describe themselves according to their sectarian affiliation: 'Methodist,' 'Baptist,' 'Anglican,' etc. A Christian's loyalty cannot be divided. Jesus demands our total commitment; we can be either an Anglican or a Christian.

2) Appeals to the Scriptures alone to establish authority.

- a) A church that claims to be continuing steadfastly in the apostles doctrine (Acts 2:42) and abiding in the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9) is a church that seeks to establish all things by the authority of Christ (Colossians 3:17).
- b) A church that claims the same and yet also appeals to a church manual, creed book, or catechism is a church that is merely seeking to maintain its sectarian distinctiveness.

7. Is the church fulfilling its mission?

- a. Someone has described the church as a 'seed sowing agency.' This epithet sums up the work of the church which is to preach the gospel (Romans 10:14-15; 1 Thessalonians 1:8). The church is also to uphold the truth (1 Timothy 3:15).
- b. However, a church that engages in social reform, involves itself in business, etc., is a church that has lost sight of its divine mission.

B. These, then, are several considerations when looking for a local church at which to place your membership. There are some worldly things that should **not** be taken into account:

1. The proximity of the church.
2. The size of the congregation.
3. The attractiveness of the building.
4. The fame of the preacher.

### Conclusion

1. Selecting a church at which to place your membership is a very important decision. But before you make your choice, there is an important distinction to be made between i) membership of a *local church*, and, ii) membership of the *universal church*.
  - a. A *local church* consists of believers meeting at a particular location. Membership is by mutual agreement.
  - b. The *universal church* consists of believers in every part of the world. One does not 'join' the universal church, God adds to it those who are being saved.
2. Before selecting a *local church*, we must ensure that we have been added to the *universal church* by the Lord. God adds one to the church when one does what is necessary to be saved: one must hear the gospel, believe that Jesus is the Savior of the world, confess with the mouth that Jesus is the Son of God, and be immersed in water for the remission of sin.
3. Once you have had your sin washed away, you can be certain that God has added you to His church. It is now time to consider the criteria for selecting a church:



- a. A church that is made up of people who have been immersed for the remission of sin.
- b. A church that preaches the gospel.
- c. A church that believes and respects the authority of the Scriptures.
- d. A church that is organized according to the pattern found in the Scriptures.
- e. A church whose worship is according to the pattern found in the Scriptures.
- f. A church that is non-sectarian.
- g. A church that is fulfilling its divine mission.

It is hoped that these guidelines have been of some assistance to you? If there are any points in this lesson you would like to study further then please contact me.



# SHOULD YOU BELIEVE IN THE TRINITY?

*A Biblical Defense of the Trinity*

## Introduction

False teachers have always attacked the central and fundamental doctrines of the faith: the Virgin birth, the bodily resurrection of Christ, the Deity of Christ, and the Trinity. These fundamental Bible truths were, before the eighteen hundreds, adhered to by all the major religious bodies (though there have always been minority groups who reject these things).

The reformation movement had produced many religious organizations, and these adhered to many of the fundamental truths. But after the eighteen hundreds we see the birth and rise of several groups that rejected nearly all these Biblical truths. The most well known of these groups are the Jehovah's Witnesses; these, more than any I know, have constantly and consistently attacked and mocked the concept of Jesus being God, and the idea of there being a three in one God. Here is just one quote...

*"The dogma of the Trinity is not found in the Bible, nor is it in harmony with what the Bible teaches"*  
(Reasoning from the scriptures; page 424).

Does the Bible teach the doctrine of the Trinity? Is such in harmony with the scriptures? In this lesson we shall, briefly, examine certain scriptures that teach the following:

1. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are called God.
2. All three personalities possess divine attributes.
3. The Trinity by association, implication, and clear statements.

## I. FATHER, SON AND HOLY SPIRIT ARE CALLED GOD

A. The Father is God (John 1:18; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Cp. John 4:23-24; 5:18).

*"No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John 1:18)*

*"But to us there is but one God, The Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him" (1 Corinthians 8:6)*

B. The Son is God (Hebrews 1:8; cp. 1 Timothy 3:16).

*"But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne O God is forever and ever" (Hebrews 1:8)*

C. The Holy Spirit is God (Luke 1:35; Acts 5:3-4).

*"And the Angel answered and said unto her, the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35)*

*"But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost...thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God" (Acts 5:3-4)*

## II. ALL THREE PERSONALITIES POSSESS THE SAME DIVINE ATTRIBUTES

A. Each personality is omnipotent.

1. The Father (Revelation 11:17).
2. The Son (Hebrews 1:3; Revelation 1:8).
3. The Holy Spirit (Hebrews 9:14). He is eternal and therefore is, of necessity, all powerful.

B. Each personality is omniscience.

1. The Father (1 John 3:20).
2. The Son (John 16:30; 21:17).
3. The Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:10-11).

C. Each personality is omnipresent.

1. The Father (Proverbs 5:21; 15:3; Psalms 66:7).
2. The Son (Matthew 18:20; Revelation 1:13).
3. The Holy Spirit (Psalms 139:7-10).

**III. ASSOCIATION, IMPLICATION, AND DIRECT STATEMENT**

A. Association - The three members of the Godhead are mentioned together in one verse (Romans 8:9; 15:30; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 2:18; Hebrews 9:14; 10:29; 1 Peter 1:12; 3:18).

B. Implication - "*Baptizing them in the NAME*" [singular] (Matthew 28:19).

C. Direct statement (1 John 5:7).

**Conclusion**

1. The word *trinity* is not in the Bible but the concept of a three in one God is clearly taught.
2. The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit are all identified as being divine, and each bears the attributes associated with Deity. This evidence combined with John's statement (1 John 5:7) must surely convince us of the truth of the blessed Trinity. Amen.

## SIGNS OF INSINCERITY

*How Do You Determine When You Are Just Casting Your Pearls Before Swine?*

### Introduction

1. One of our responsibilities is to share the good news with all those with whom we come into contact.

a. The original commission was given to the apostles:

*“And He said to them, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15 NASB)*

b. Having been taught by the apostles, each disciple recognized their responsibility to preach the word:

*“Therefore, those who had been scattered went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:4 NASB)*

2. Yes, you must share the good news with all men, but we must also use common sense:

*“Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces” (Matthew 7:6 NASB)*

“The meaning here is that, we should refrain from presenting the truths of the gospel and doctrines of God to those of a carnal and brutish nature; whose sense and appreciation of true values has been dulled by the practise of sin and indulgence of the flesh; whose hearts are corrupted beyond redemption. Such people are symbolised by dogs and swine, animals that were regarded as unclean by Jewish law. Preaching to such men will only be met with verbal abuse and blasphemy” (*Quotes & Things, Commentary, D. Collins*)

“It is our duty to help and to try to save others, but we must use common sense” (PNT).

3. However, not all dogs and swine are so obvious! Some people may appear very religious and seem very keen to study.

a. **Is it possible to tell when someone is insincere?**

b. I believe it is possible to determine when someone is insincere. However, there is such a vast array of signs that we couldn't possibly list them all here. Instead, I will attempt to note some of the more salient.

c. The whole point or purpose of recognizing these signs is that we might know when to shake the dust of our feet (Matthew 10:14) and seek out those who are truly sincere.

### I. A SUGGESTED APPROACH

A. **Approach.** Before teaching can commence, it is essential to know something of the person's religious background. This will enable you to determine the best approach and presentation of the gospel.

1. Philip's approach: the eunuch was from Ethiopia but had been to Jerusalem for worship. He was, more than likely, a proselyte to the Jewish faith. He was, then, familiar with the Scriptures and was reading from Isaiah on his way home. It would not have been difficult for Philip to deduce all this. Philip's approach was to preach to him Jesus from the very scripture he was reading at the time (Acts 8:26-35).

2. At Mars Hill, Paul had before him an audience of philosophers and idolaters. Where does he begin? Fortunately or providentially, he saw an inscription to *“the unknown God”* and began teaching on the nature of the true God. Note also, he quoted from their own poets to make a point (Acts 17:16-23).

Could the same approach have been used interchangeably? Of course not!

B. **Teaching.** Whatever the beginning point, our teaching must culminate in Jesus as our Saviour from sin, and a call to obey the gospel. Depending on the individual circumstances, this may take place the same day or after several days (Those who continue studying with someone for months on end may be focusing on things that should be studied after conversion).

## II. SIGNS

A. It is during the teaching sessions that you should be able to determine whether or not a person is a sincere seeker.

B. Signs of sincerity:

1. **Nobility.** It was said of the Bereans that they were “*noble*” (Acts 17:11). The word *noble* literally means, “*more noble by birth; descended from more illustrious ancestors*” (Barnes). But its meaning here denotes a quality of mind. Barnes says, “*They were more generous, liberal, and noble in their feelings; more disposed to inquire candidly into the truth of the doctrines advanced by Paul and Silas.*” Their nobility evidenced itself in that...
  - a. “*They received the word with all readiness of mind.*” They listened attentively to the gospel message. They did not reject it as unworthy of examination.
  - b. “*And searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*” They studied the scriptures to see if the doctrines they were being taught were true.
2. **Personal study.** A sincere and committed person will be engaged in personal study.
  - a. By “*study*” we do not mean merely reading. This has its place but *study* involves a lot more effort (it is not within the scope of this lesson to expand on the meaning of study).
  - b. There are several reasons for study:
    - 1) To increase in knowledge (2 Peter 3:18).
    - 2) To find out what the will of the Lord is (Ephesians 5:17).
    - 3) To prevent one’s self being led astray with false teaching (1 John 4:1; Matthew 24:4-5).
    - 4) To mature to the point where we might edify the church (Ephesians 4:11-16; Hebrews 5:12-14).
  - c. Whenever I go to a study, I look around for “*tools*”:
 

“I went to a friend’s house for dinner. During the course of conversation he spoke to me of his passion for gardening. Later, I had the opportunity to walk round his garden and two things surprised me: first, the garden itself was obviously unkept; secondly, I observed that there were no garden tools in the shed. I suspect his passion was merely intellectual rather than practical. Likewise, many exhibit a passion for the scriptures in their words, yet their bible sits on the shelf gathering dust, and there is a conspicuous absence of bible study aids”  
(*Quotes & Things, Thoughts*, D. Collins).

    - 1) Greek dictionary.
    - 2) Bible dictionary.
    - 3) Commentaries.
    - 4) Concordance.

These are just a few of the tools required to study God’s word effectively. Those who have no such tools, or view them as unnecessary, are not studying.

3. **Obedience.** A sincere person will obey what he has come to understand.
  - a. Once the knowledge and understanding was in place, obedience to the gospel was almost immediate (Acts 2:14-41).
  - b. An insincere person will either procrastinate or become contentious (Acts 24:25).

4. Miscellaneous. There may be many other little signs: falling asleep during videos, general body language, silly argumentation, failure to keep appointments, etc.

Those who show no evidence of nobility, give no evidence of personal bible study, and render no obedience to the gospel display all the signs of being insincere. Do not cast your pearls before swine; it's time to move on!

### III. PERSONAL APPLICATION

- A. Perhaps you have agreed with me that, those who show no evidence of nobility, give no evidence of personal bible study, and render no obedience to the gospel display all the signs of being insincere?
- B. Now it is time to turn the tables and examine ourselves! Are you sincere?
  1. Do you show the same nobility as the Bereans?
    - a. Do you receive the word with gladness of mind? Do you listen attentively?
    - b. Or do you find sermons and Bible classes boring?
  2. Do you study the scriptures?
    - a. Do you really study the scriptures? What was the last subject you studied? What topic are you studying at the moment? Can you produce your study notes?
    - b. Or do you say, "*I learnt all I needed to learn during my first few years as a Christian.*" Or maybe your just too busy to study?
  3. Do you obey the Lord in all things?
    - a. Are you making a conscious effort to control your tongue?
    - b. Have you put away the sins of the flesh?

### Conclusion

1. We each have the responsibility to share the gospel with whomever we associate.
2. But we must exercise a degree of wisdom, we must be careful not to cast our pearls before swine.
3. Those who are sincere will exhibit nobility, they will be engaged in personal bible study, and they will obey the Lord in all things. We should not waste our time on those who are insincere; we must continue our search for those who seek the truth.
4. In the same way we measure the sincerity of prospects we measure our own sincerity.

Preach the gospel to all creation, do not cast your pearls before swine, and examine yourselves whether you are in the faith.





# GOING ON TO PERFECTION

## *Signs Of Spiritual Growth*

### Introduction

1. In the previous lesson we considered...
  - a. Why some Christians fail to grow: (i) They are still serving two masters, (ii) Some are double-minded, (iii) Some lack true faith, (iv) Others suppose they have already grown sufficiently.
  - b. Things that promote spiritual growth: (i) Attitude toward studying, (ii) Diligent Bible study, (iii) Trials and temptations, (iv) Striving to attain our goal, (v) Cooperating with pastors and teachers.
2. This lesson will consider just a few of the evidences or signs of spiritual growth. I believe this lesson can serve as both an examination and a guide.

### I. GROWING IN KNOWLEDGE



#### A. The peril of stagnation:

##### 1. What God's word has done for us:

- a. **BIRTH.** It is through the preaching of God's word that we came to a knowledge of the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:14), which caused us to be born again<sup>4</sup> (James 1:18).

*"Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls through the Spirit for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, **for you have been born again...through the living and enduring word of God**" (1 Peter 1:22-23 NASB)*



- b. **GROWTH.** Just as new born babes *intensely crave*<sup>5</sup> food, so we must have an *intense craving* for that spiritual food, which is the word of God, and it is by studying the word of God that we grow (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

*"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, **that ye may grow thereby**" (1 Peter 2:2)*

- c. **MATURITY.** Through the diligent study of God's word we must progress beyond first principles to the meatier teachings of the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 3:2). As we continue to study we are training our spiritual faculties – the goal of this training is that we might be able to discern between good and evil, i.e., between doctrines that promote godliness and those that sicken and even destroy the soul.

*"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. **But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil**" (Hebrews 5:12-14 NASB)*

2. The Christians to whom Paul wrote had begun well enough, in that, they had received the word of God to the saving of their souls, and had intensely craved the sincere milk of the word, but now...

- a. They had become "*dull of hearing*" (Hebrews 5:11). The doctrines of the gospel had been laid before them but they were slow to comprehend – they made no effort to understand, but were always learning and not able to come to a full understanding of the truth.



<sup>4</sup> John 3:3, 5.

<sup>5</sup> In 1 Peter 2:2, the word "desire" is from the Greek word *epipotheo* and it means to "intensely crave" (Strong's)

- b. Paul had judged that *enough time* had elapsed – “*For though by this time*” (Hebrews 5:12) – for them to have matured and be teaching others, but they had actually gone backward! To their shame he says, “*you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food*” (Hebrews 5:12 ESV). They lost their *intense craving* for the word of God by which they might grow (1 Peter 2:2), and the consequences were that they became dull of hearing, and even “*forgot*” the first principles.

B. Looking at the signs from a negative and positive perspective:

- 1. Looking at it from a negative point of view, one of the signs that a Christian is not growing is when he has become “*dull of hearing*” and, as Daniel H. King, Sr. says, “*They are able to assimilate only the most elementary teaching and are that basic level. They will because these matters are competence.*”
- 2. Looking at things from a positive perspective, one of the signs of spiritual growth is seen in our ability to discern between good and evil
- 3. Looking at things from a positive perspective, one of the signs of spiritual growth is seen in his continued training of the faculties that enable him to discern between good and evil. Maturity is the result of continuing to *intensely crave* the pure milk of the word, and a diligent study of God’s word.

One of the signs of spiritual growth is seen in our ability to discern between good and evil



II. KNOWLEDGE THAT BRINGS FORTH FRUIT

A. Be filled with the Spirit:

- 1. Reading and studying the Bible everyday doesn’t necessarily mean we are spiritual! In other words, studying the Bible doesn’t *make* you grow – we have, as Paul says, to “*let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...*” (Colossians 3:16). As Walton Weaver says, “*To let Christ’s word dwell in one is to allow oneself to be brought under its influence. The Christian must allow the truth of the gospel to supply his leading motivations, inspire his important decisions, and determine all his actions*” (Underlining is mine D.C.).
- 2. In a parallel passage, Paul says, “*And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit*” (Ephesians 5:18). The meaning is the same: “*Paul’s admonition from a practical point of view instructs us to fill ourselves with God’s word and be led to what we do by the teaching of the Holy Spirit...*” (C.G. Caldwell, Truth Commentaries, Ephesians) (Underlining mine D.C.).

B. If we are *letting* the word of Christ dwell in us and *being* filled with the Spirit, then this will be evidenced by our character and in our behavior:

- 1. The church at Corinth had many problems, and at the root of them all was their failure to be filled with Spirit. Paul says, “*And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?*” (1 Corinthians 3:1-3 NASB). They were receiving the teaching – “*I gave you milk to drink*” – but they were not maturing – “*not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it*” – They were not allowing themselves to be brought under the influence of the Spirit’s teaching; they were not allowing the word of Christ to dwell in them richly.
- 2. The only way we can stop walking according to the flesh is to walk by the Spirit. Paul says, “*But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh*” (Galatians 5:16 NASB). If we are walking by the Spirit or living a life that is under the influence and direction of the Spirit, then this will be evidenced by the fruit of the Spirit in our lives: “*But the fruit of the Spirit...*” – which refers to those attitudes and dispositions that we develop by following the teaching of the Holy Spirit as revealed in the Scriptures – “*...is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law*” (Galatians 5:22-23 NASB).

C. Looking at the signs from a negative and positive perspective:

1. Looking at it from a negative point of view, one of the signs that a Christian is not growing is when he is allowing himself to be his own fleshly and worldly as can be seen in the John 2:16), seeking outbursts of anger (see James jealousy (see James 3:16), (Galatians 5:15), gossip<sup>6</sup> (see
2. Looking at things from a signs of spiritual growth is Spirit to influence his thoughts, words, and behavior. This is one who exhibits love toward God, his brethren, and fellow man, has a disposition of joyfulness (even in trials), is filled with that peace that surpasses understanding, et al.

One of the signs of spiritual growth is seen in our allowing the Spirit to influence our life. The evidence of the indwelling of the Spirit is the fruit He bears in our lives

influenced and controlled by desires – the evidence of this, Corinthian church, is pride (see 1 preeminence (see 3 John 1:9), 1:20), arguing (see Titus 3:9), envy (see Job 5:2), backbiting Proverbs 18:8), slander, etc.

positive perspective, one of the when he is allowing the Holy Spirit to influence his thoughts, words, and behavior. This is one who exhibits love toward God, his brethren, and fellow man, has a disposition of joyfulness (even in trials), is filled with that peace that surpasses understanding, et al.

*“Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but **rejoices** with the truth; **bears** all things, **believes** all things, **hopes** all things, **endures** all things” (1 Corinthians 13:4-7 NASB)*

III. THE SPIRITUAL MAN

- A. Those that are spiritual are those who are guided by the revelation of God and, therefore, can properly evaluate and examine spiritual things (1 Corinthians 2:12-16), and are able by the exercising of the faculties to discern between good and evil (Hebrews 5:14; cp. Ephesians 4:14).
- B. Such a level of maturity will result in two things (although some see these as aspects of the one):

1. “You ought to be teachers” (Hebrews 5:12). This is what was expected of these Christians. By “teachers” he doesn’t simply mean that they should be able to impart the gospel to others, although this is most definitely included, but means they should be *ready to make a defence to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you* (1 Peter 3:15), *correct those who are in opposition* (2 Timothy 2:24-26), *exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict* (Titus 1:9; cp. Acts 18:24-28), etc.
2. “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, **ye which are spiritual**, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness...” (Galatians 6:1). As Mike Willis says, “The word **spiritual** (pneumatikos) looks back to chapter 5. It relates to those who ‘walk in the Spirit,’ are ‘led of the Spirit,’ and manifest the ‘fruit of the Spirit’ in contrast with those who do the works of the flesh. It refers to those who are ‘filled with and governed by the Spirit of God.’” Willis closes by saying, “The work of restoring erring brethren cannot be done by hypocritical, half-converted ‘Christians’”.



C. Looking at the signs from a negative and positive perspective:

1. Looking at it from a negative point of view, one of the signs that a Christian is not growing is in his failure to be able to teach others, restore an erring brother or
2. Looking at things from a signs of spiritual growth is seen in our ability to teach others, give a defence to council and restore erring

One of the signs of spiritual growth is seen in our ability to teach others and restore those who are overtaken by a fault

defend the hope he has, and sister.

positive perspective, one of the seen in his ability to be able to for the hope he has, and be able brethren.

<sup>6</sup> Gossip destroys three people: the one who gossips, the one who listens, and the one who is being gossiped about.

## **Conclusion**

1. In this lesson we have considered three signs of spiritual growth: (i) In our ability to discern between good and evil, (ii) In our allowing the Holy Spirit to influence and direct us in every aspect of our lives; the evidences of this is seen in the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, and (iii) In our ability to teach others and restore erring brethren.
2. In considering these signs, each one of us can determine whether he is growing spiritually. Let those who are failing to grow seek guidance and let those who are spiritual be there those who need help and encouragement.

## SIN BUSTERS

### Introduction

1. Each of us is tempted to sin on a daily basis.
2. Below are seven suggestions that will help us to resist temptations.

### I. BELIEVE THE PROMISE

- A. When God makes a promise, He keeps it; He does not lie (Hebrews 6:13-18).
- B. The Lord knows how to rescue the Godly from trials (2 Peter 2:6-9).
- C. We cannot be tempted above that which we are able to bear (1 Corinthians 10:13).

### II. PRAY

- A. Pray not to fall into temptation (Matthew 26:41).
- B. If you have a problem with sin; pray (James 5:13-16).
- C. Pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

### III. STUDY

- A. We are to desire God's word (1 Peter 2:2).
- B. Hide God's word in your heart to avoid sinning (Psalms.119:11).
- C. Through study, we build up a hatred for sin (Psalms.119:104).

### IV. KEEP YOUR MIND ON THINGS ABOVE

- A. Do not worry about the physical needs, but seek God's kingdom (Matthew 6:19-33).
- B. Set your minds on things above (Philippians 4:7-8).
- C. Only a spiritual man understands spiritual things and keeps from sin (1 Corinthians 2:14-15).

### V. HAVE GOALS

- A. Make your goal to preach to others (Romans 15:20).
- B. Make it your aim to become more involved with church work (Cp. 1 Corinthians 12:4-11).
- C. Make it your goal to grow in the Christian graces (2 Peter 1:4-8).

### VI. KEEP BUSY

- A. Jesus said *"I must be about My Father's business"* (Luke 2:49).
- B. *"Go work in My vineyard"* (Matthew 21:28).
- C. Labor to be accepted by Him (2 Corinthians 5:9).

### VII. KEEP THE RIGHT COMPANY

- A. Do not sit with evil doers (Psalms.26:4-5).
- B. Do not socialize with sinful brethren (1 Corinthians 5:11).
- C. Bad company corrupts good morals (1 Corinthians 15:33).

## **Conclusion**

1. We shall never, in this life, totally conquer sin. We will always fall short.
2. We have considered seven things that will help us to resist temptations.
3. Consider these things carefully because:

*“Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him” (1 John 3:6)*

## SITTING AT JESUS' FEET

*Becoming a Student of God's Word*

### Introduction

1. Jesus invites anyone who is wearied and burdened to come and *learn* from Him:

*“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and **learn from Me**, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and **YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS**” (Matthew 11:28-29 NASB)*

2. The object of learning from Jesus is that we become like Him:

*“It is enough for the disciple that **he become like his teacher**, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household!” (Matthew 10:25 NASB)*

*“A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, **after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher**” (Luke 6:40 NASB)*

3. Jesus is not physically here with us today so how can we learn from Him, become fully trained, and become like Him? Paul's instruction to Timothy provides the answer:

*“And that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, **for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be perfect, equipped for every good work**” (2 Timothy 3:15-17 NASB)*

4. The purpose of Bible study for us today should be the same as those disciples who followed Jesus and learnt of Him, i.e., to become like Him.
  - a. Studying God's word means absorbing its teachings and allowing them to shape our lives.
  - b. If we truly desire our study of God's word to shape our lives then five things must take place...

### I. SEARCHING

- A. Commenting on the word *search* in John 5:39, one commentator says:

*“The Greek word here rendered search signifies a strict, close, diligent, curious search, such as men make when they are seeking gold, or hunters when they are in earnest after game. We must not rest content with having given a superficial reading to a chapter or two, but with the candle of the Spirit we must deliberately seek out the hidden meaning of the word. Holy Scripture requires searching – much of it can only be learned by careful study” (Charles Spurgeon).*

- B. There are several examples of those who diligently searched the scriptures:

1. The prophets, in connection with salvation, sought to know the person and time the Spirit indicated:

*“As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made **careful searches [G1830]** and inquiries, **seeking [G2045]** to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow” (1 Peter 1:10-11 NASB)*

2. Jesus acknowledged that he Jews searched the Scriptures for eternal life:

*“You **search [G2045]** the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me” (John 5:39 NASB)*

3. The Bereans searched the Scriptures to see if the teaching of Paul was so:

*“Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, **examining [G350]** the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11 NASB)*

## II. MEDITATING

A. Meditating involves spending time on a particular portion on God’s word: pondering and considering its teaching and absorbing it into the mind. *“Meditation is disciplined thought, focused on a single object or scripture for a period of time”* (Charles Swindoll). Someone has said, *“Meditation is the soul’s chewing”* (William Grimshaw).

B. There are many Scriptures that speak of meditation and its benefits:

1. Meditation is commanded:

*“This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but **you shall** meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success” (Joshua 1:8 NASB)*

2. Meditation should be our desire and delight:

*“**I will** meditate on Your precepts And regard Your ways” (Psalms 119:15 NASB)*

*“But his **delight** is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night” (Psalms 1:2 NASB)*

3. Meditation provides greater insight:

*“I have more **insight** than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation” (Psalms 119:99 NASB)*

## III. MEMORIZING

A. The Scriptures strongly encourage us to memorize God’s word or ‘hide it in our hearts.’

*“Your word I have **stored** in my heart, That I may not sin against You” (Psalms 119:11 NASB)*

*“Please receive instruction from His mouth And **lay up** His words in your heart” (Job 22:22 NASB)*

*“Let the word of Christ richly **dwell within** you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (Colossians 3:16 NASB)*

B. Memorizing the word of God will ensure that we walk according to God’s will and keep us from slipping:

*“I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart” (Psalms 40:8 NASB)*

*“The law of his God is in his heart; His steps do not slip” (Psalms 37:31 NASB)*

## IV. SUBMITTING

A. Merely filling your head with Biblical knowledge will not shape your life...you must submit to it, you must put it into practice. Jesus says, *“Blessed are those who hear the word of God and obey it”* (Luke 11:28).

1. Without works of obedience we no better off than demons (James 2:19).

2. If Jesus is our Lord then we will do the things He says:

*“Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46 NASB)*



3. Only when we walk in obedience and submission to God's will are we allowing to shape our lives.
  - a. The goal of God's instruction is love (1 Timothy 1:5).
  - b. And love always **acts** (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

## V. SHARING

- A. The process of study is not complete until what has been searched, meditated upon, memorized, and submitted to is shared with others. *"To teach is to learn twice"* (Joseph Joubert).
- B. One the many purposes of studying God's word is that we should we share it with others. *"Those who keep the word imprisoned in their heart have learnt nothing"* (*Quotes & Things*, Thoughts, D. Collins).

*"What I tell you in private, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops"* (Matthew 10:27 NASB)

## Conclusion

1. We study God's word because we desire its teachings to shape our lives. In order for this shaping to take place, five things must happen:
  - a. We must be diligent if our efforts to search the Scriptures.
  - b. We must meditate on its teachings.
  - c. We must memorize or lay up its teachings in our heart.
  - d. We must submit to its teachings.
  - e. We must share what we learn with others.
2. Only by doing these things will you become a student of God's word. Paul's prayer for the Philippians best sums up what it really means to be a student of God's word:

*"And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God"* (Philippians 1:9-11 NASB)



# SMOKING

## Introduction

1. A large percentage of the population smoke cigarettes, including many Christians!
2. Here are three reasons why a Christian should not smoke.

## I. HARMFUL EFFECTS ON THE BODY

A. For every thousand people who smoke:

1. One hundred will contract heart disease.
2. Eighty will contract lung cancer.
3. Seventy will contract bronchitis.

B. Fact:

1. Two hundred people die every day through smoking related disease.
2. That's fourteen hundred a week
3. That's five thousand six hundred a month
4. That's seventy-two thousand, eight hundred a year.

## II. "IT'S MY BODY AND I'M NOT HARMING ANYONE ELSE"

A. Paul tells us that our body is not ours. We are bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

B. You are harming someone else!

"Yet again we have been told that several hundreds of non smokers will die this year of fumes induced by the presence of heavily smoking colleagues. An expert has said that the number is derisory and unimportant compared with the deaths of hundreds and thousands of people who do smoke."

## III. A GOOD EXAMPLE

A. Cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh.

*"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1)*

B. Nothing to have mastery over the body (1 Corinthians 6:12).

C. Christians to set a good example (1 Timothy 4:12).

## Conclusion

1. Smoking is harmful to the body and kills seventy-two thousand people a year. It also kills non-smokers. A person who smokes is not obeying as written in 1 Corinthians 6:12.
2. Surely, no Christian who smokes can claim to be in control of his/her own body. Nor can such claim to be giving a good example.
3. If you do not smoke, do not start. If you do smoke - STOP!



# SPIRITUAL GROWTH

## Learning and Application

### Introduction

“...we are to **grow up** in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ” (Ephesians 4:15 NASB)

1. Growth cannot take place without proper nurturing. This is true both physically and spiritually:

a. Physically:

“...The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains” (James 5:7 NASB)

b. Spiritually:

“What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth” (1 Corinthians 3:5-7 NASB)

2. There are several arenas that are conducive to spiritual growth and this is the first of several lessons discussing such. This lesson will focus on **learning and application**.

### I. INHERENT DESIRES

A. A desire for knowledge (Cp. Proverbs 18:15).

1. Growth begins with an *intense craving* for God’s word.

“Like newborn babies, intensely crave the uncorrupted milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation” (1 Peter 2:2 NASB)

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.” (Proverbs 1:7 NASB)

“The mind of the intelligent seeks knowledge, but the mouth of fools feeds on folly” (Proverbs 15:14 NASB)

2. Growth takes place as we listen to and study God’s word.

“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17 KJV)

“And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-13 NASB)

B. A desire for truth.

1. Studying without a love of the truth will lead to spiritual delusion rather than growth.

“Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness” (2 Thessalonians 2:8-12 NASB).



2. A person might appear very religious yet be deluded (James 1:22; 2:17).

a. Paul describes such people...

*"Always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7 NASB)*

b. Commenting on this verse, one commentator says...

"They may learn many things, but the true nature of religion they do not learn. There are many such persons in the world, who, whatever attention they may pay to religion, never understand its nature. Many obtain much speculative acquaintance with the 'doctrines' of Christianity, but never become savingly acquainted with the system; many study the constitution and government of the church, but remain strangers to practical piety; many become familiar with the various philosophical theories of religion, but never become truly acquainted with what religion is; and many embrace visionary theories, who never show that they are influenced by the spirit of the gospel. Nothing is more common than for persons to be very busy and active in religion, and even to 'learn' many things about it, who still remain strangers to the saving power of the gospel" (Barnes).

C. A desire to practice the truth.

1. It is essential to make application of learning:

a. Put your faith into practice:

*"But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves" (James 1:22 NASB)*

*"What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, Go in peace, be warmed and be filled, and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself" (James 2:14-17 NASB)*

*"Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world" (James 1:27<sup>7</sup> NASB)*

b. Paul admonished the Corinthians because of their failure to put their knowledge into practice:

*"And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. **I gave you milk to drink**, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, **for you are still fleshly**. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?" (1 Corinthians 3:1-3 NASB)*

2. Many might claim to be religious and call Jesus their Lord but this claim is only true of those who obey Him (Matthew 7:21-23).

*"Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46 NASB)*

*"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter" (Matthew 7:21 NASB)*

*"Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation," (Hebrews 5:8-9 NASB)*

<sup>7</sup> The apostle does not say that this is the whole of religion, or that there is nothing else essential to it; but his general design clearly is, to show that religion will lead to a holy life, and he mentions this as a specimen, or an instance of what it will lead us to do.

3. The assurance that we abide in God should not rest on our feelings...it is only through our obedience to His word that we can be sure we abide in the Father and the Son.

*“Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him” (John 14:23 NASB)*

*“The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us” (1 John 3:24 NASB)*

## II. GROWING IN KNOWLEDGE

Peter tells us that the pure milk of the word will nourish and cause growth (1 Peter 2:2). But how do we acquire this milk?

- A. By availing ourselves of the gifts that Christ has given to the church (Ephesians 4:10-13).

1. Sermons and Classes. Whenever we come together as a church there is usually a sermon and a Bible class. It is through these that we are edified (1 Corinthians 14:26). But we must still be sure to *“test the spirits”*:

- a. John says, *“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world”* (1 John 4:1 NASB).

- 1) There are now, as there were then, many false teachers in the world, and those who have little knowledge of the Scriptures are in danger of being *“carried about by every wind of doctrine”* (Ephesians 4:14; cp. Galatians 1:6-7).
- 2) John’s instruction is to *“test the spirits”*. The *“spirits”* here refer to those claiming to be preachers and teachers. We can test what we are being taught by comparing their teaching to what is revealed in the Bible. As Barnes says on this phrase, *“...he refers to the ability of doing this by a comparison of the doctrines which they professed to hold with what was revealed...”* (Barnes). An example:

*“Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11 NASB)*

- b. You can compare what is being said by...

- 1) Turning and reading the references as they are quoted. One disadvantage of this is that you will not be able to examine the verse in its context.
  - 2) Taking notes. Going through your notes at a later time will allow you to examine each reference in its context and meditate further on the lesson.
  - 3) Record the lesson.
2. Home studies. This is where a knowledgeable and capable member of the church studies with you on a one-to-one basis. This may be done in two ways:
    - a. At home. Your teacher sets up a weekly study with you in your home.
    - b. By assignment. Your teacher gives you a weekly assignment.

- B. By doing your own studies.

*“He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.) And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:10-13)*

### III. STUDYING THE SCRIPTURES

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet  
and a light to my path."  
(Psalms 119:105 NASBR)*

A. Peter says that as newborn babes we should desire the sincere milk of the word (1 Peter 2:2). This necessarily involves studying.

1. There are many Scriptures that exhort us to study either by...

a. A direct statement:

*"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15 KJV)*

b. An inference.

*"Like newborn babies, intensely crave the uncorrupted milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation" (1 Peter 2:2 NASB)*

*"And that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:15-17 NASB)*

*"Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Colossians 3:16 NASB)*

c. An example.

*"Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11 NASB)*

2. It is through studying the Scriptures that we grow but there are many other benefits also (too many to list here). Here are just a few other reasons to study:

*"How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word" (Psalms 119:9 NASB)*

*"Establish Your word to Your servant, As that which produces reverence for You" (Psalms 119:38 NASB)*

*"Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21 NASB)*

*"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NASB)*

B. One of the most common questions that people ask is, "How do I study the Bible?" In this section we will list some of the different types of study.

1. Reading. By reading through a book or letter you can gain insight and understanding:

*"By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ" (Ephesians 3:4 NASB)*

2. Reading with understanding and intent.

a. Choose a book or a letter that you want to study and then find out who wrote the book, to whom it was written, and when it was written.



- b. Then, as you read through it, try to determine why the book was written and see if you can discover the main theme/s.
3. Reading and summarizing.
    - a. Read through a book one chapter at a time and at the end of each chapter write a brief summary of your understand of it. Also, highlight verses that interest you and underline or make notes in the margin of anything you do not understand. You may need to get a wide margin Bible or make your notes on paper.
    - b. When you have done this, read through the same book again and repeat the process, but this time, summarize one paragraph at a time.
  4. Topical study. When you have completed a 'reading and summarizing' study of all the books and letters, you can now start doing topical studies (Having gone through each book and letter in the manner described above, you are less likely to select verses out of context).
    - a. Select a topic (always choose simple subject to begin with) and then read through the Scriptures (or you could use a concordance) and make a note of every passage and Scripture that relates to the topic you are studying.
    - b. By comparing all the Scriptures together you will be able to compile notes on what the Scriptures teach on your chosen topic.
  5. Word studies. This involves selecting a particular word (e.g., "love") and then discovering its meaning and how it is used in the Scriptures.

*"The sum of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting." (Psalms 119:160 NASB)*

### Conclusion

1. Just as a newborn baby craves the pure milk of its mother, we also must crave the pure word of God that we may grow (1 Peter 2:2). But as we study, we must be sure that...
  - a. We have a love of the truth (Psalms 119:47-48, 97, 127, 163) or we will become easy prey for false teaches (2 Thessalonians 2:8-12).
  - b. Put the word into practice; or we are deluding ourselves (James 1:22).
2. There are two ways we can grow in knowledge:
  - a. By learning from those who preach and teach.
  - b. By studying the Scriptures ourselves (this is the most rewarding).
3. There many different types of study: reading, topical studies, word studies, etc. It is best to follow the progression listed here.

If you study on a regular basis then I encourage you to continue to do so that you may continue to grow.

If you are not studying then I urge you to resolve to begin today that you may grow.



## SPIRITUAL MANNA

*“It is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat” (Exodus 16:15)*

### Introduction

*“He rained down manna upon them to eat And gave them food from heaven” (Psalms 78:24 NASB)*

1. During the time that Israel wandered in the wilderness, God fed them with manna (Exodus 16:1-15). It fell like dew from heaven, and it could be gathered up, cooked, and eaten as bread. Israel had no idea what it was, and so they called it “manna” (“what is it?”). Israel could not have survived in the wilderness without this *bread of heaven*.
2. This manna prefigured the true *bread of heaven* that was to come in the person of Jesus the Christ.

### I. THE MANNA FROM HEAVEN

#### A. God’s provision for His people:

1. Soon after leaving Egypt, Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron, saying, *“Would that we had died by the LORD’S hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger”* (Exodus 16:3). In reality, the people were grumbling against the Lord (Exodus 16:8).
2. Despite their grumbling, the Lord promised, *“Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you”* (Exodus 16:4a). The Lord also instructed them, *“The people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction. On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily”* (Exodus 16:4b-5).



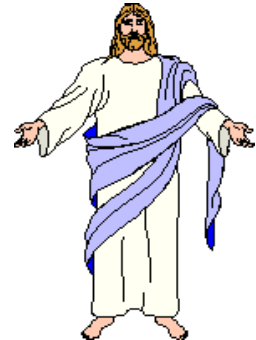
#### B. The goodness and mercy of God:

1. As we consider the immensity and greatness of this provision we come to see the goodness and mercy of God. The manna fell from heaven six days a week for forty years (Twice the amount fell on Friday).
  2. To feed the whole nation of Israel would have required **4, 500 tons of manna every day**. To bring this into some kind of perspective, this would be the equivalent of 10 trains each pulling 30 carriages arriving every morning (Sunday to Friday).
- C. God so fed them to teach them to rely upon Him (Deuteronomy 8:5). God provided the manna so that Israel would learn that man does not live by the bread that he gains by his toil alone (cf. Genesis 3:17-19); they can only survive by trusting in the LORD and His blessings.

### II. THE TRUE BREAD OF HEAVEN

- A. So it was with the physical manna with which God fed Israel. Jesus said that all of those who ate that manna died, but He came to provide a better bread, as He explains...

*“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh” (John 6:47-51 NASB)*



- B. The manna that Israel ate is the physical copy of the spiritual reality in Jesus Christ. It came down from Heaven, as did Jesus. Israel ate of it and lived; we must spiritually partake of Jesus to live.

1. God intended the physical manna to direct Israel to the mouth of God; we must subsist upon the Word of God, the Bread of Life, if we desire to live eternally.
2. Therefore, as recipients of the promise and inheritors of the Kingdom, we must partake of the “*spiritual manna*.” We must “*digest*” the Word of God, who became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:1, 14), that is, Jesus and His instruction. We must learn of Him and trust in Him as Israel was to trust God in the Wilderness.

### **Conclusion**

As we persevere in the wilderness of our lives on earth, heading toward the Promised Land of rest that is set before us (Hebrews 4:1-11; 12:1-2, 1 Peter 1:3-9), let us take strength by feasting on the Word of God, that we may never lose hold of true life – eternal life.

*“This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3 NASB)*



## SPIRITUAL VIGOR

*Hebrews 12:12-17*

### Introduction

1. Why is the writer encouraging these Christians to renew their spiritual vitality?
2. Why does he encourage them to pursue peace and holiness?
3. What danger existed that they might fall from grace?
4. Why should any root of bitterness spring up?
5. Why, the solemn warning about finding no place for repentance?

[The first two points of this lesson deal with the context, and the second two points deal with the opening text.]

### I. RUN WITH ENDURANCE

- A. These Christians were undergoing, which would consider great persecution (Hebrews 10:32-34).
- B. How should they react to this persecution? The writer points to those who have suffered before them. They were imprisoned, stoned, sawn in two, slain with the sword; some wandered in animal skins being afflicted, destitute, and tormented. Of whom the world was not worthy (Hebrews 11:35-38).
- C. With such examples to consider the writer exhorts them to run with endurance (Hebrews 12:1).
- D. Therefore, they are urged to:
  1. *“Lay aside every weight,”* i.e., in view of the context, an excessive concern for the body and for the things of this world (Hebrews 12:1 > Matthew 10:39).
  2. *“The sin that so easily ensnares us”* i.e. a lack of faith, unbelief (Hebrews 12:1)
- E. For greater encouragement the writer points them to the example of Jesus, who...
  1. Endured rejection, name calling, plots to take His life, beatings and mockings. He also endured betrayal and desertion by His closet friends, crucifixion, further mocking and taunts while He yet hung upon the cross (Mark 5:17; Matthew 12:24; Luke 22:2; John 19:1-4; Matthew 26:47-56; 27:35, 38-44).
  2. Despite all this Jesus said:

*“Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots”* (Luke 23:34).

[No wonder the writer of Hebrews says, *“Looking unto Jesus”* (Hebrews 12:2)].
  3. Why should these Hebrew Christians run with endurance? For the same reason as Jesus: *“For the joy that was set before Him”* (Hebrews 12:2 < 2 Timothy 4:6-8).

### II. ENDURE THE CHASTENING OF THE LORD

- A. The writer admits that the Hebrews were suffering persecution (Hebrews 10:32-34).
- B. He suggests they may also be suffering chastisement from the Lord (Hebrews 12:7).
- C. With this in view:
  1. They were not to despise this chastening nor become discouraged. Again the writer exhorts them to endure (Hebrews 12:7).
  2. Such chastening is an assurance that you are sons of God.
  3. Such chastening is for their profit: *“That we may be partakers of His holiness”* (Hebrews 12:10).

### III. SPIRITUAL VITALITY

A. *“Therefore...”* i.e. since these things are so, because what I have told you is true, with these things in mind you should:

1. *“Strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees”* (Hebrews 12:12).
2. Or *“get a grip on yourself...stand up and fight like a man”*, as we might say.

B. Such faith and patience enable us to:

1. *“Pursue peace with all men”* (Hebrews 12:14). *“All men”* would also include them that were presently persecuting them (Romans 12:14-21).
2. *“Pursue holiness”*. Despite the adverse conditions and circumstances they are to maintain a high standard of morality and behave in a godly manner (Hebrews 12:14).

### IV. WATCH YOURSELF

A. *“Lest any fall short of the grace of God”* (Hebrews 12:15).

1. A failure to bring present sufferings into proper perspective will lead to the souring of the spirit and the stirring up of worldly passions.
2. The mind turns to worldly things and there is a change in behavior.

B. Physical well being and personal concerns begin to take president over spiritual considerations, then a root of bitterness springs up. And its fruit is born (Hebrews 12:15):

1. Principles become corrupted.
2. Attention to doctrine is abandoned.
3. Corrupt practices ensue.

C. The effect is twofold

1. The church is affected (Hebrews 12:15 (Cancer cell ill)).
2. The individual puts his own soul in danger (Hebrews 12:16-17). Chastening [3809]; Holiness [38]; Bitterness [4088].

### Conclusion

1. Whatever difficult situation we find ourselves facing, we need to, at such times, turn and read Hebrews chapter eleven, and consider the endurance of those men and women under the trial of suffering. We need at such times, to look to the example of Jesus. We must be encouraged and emboldened by such examples. We must *“endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ”*.
2. In facing hardship we need to consider that the Lord chastens those whom He loves, which is evidence of our sonship. We must strengthen our spirits and have a resolute mind to maintain our faith, stick to our principles, and maintain standards of morality.
3. One scripture says,

*“If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small”* (Proverbs 24:10).

[Read Hebrews 10:31-39.]

## “SUBMIT TO THEM THAT HAVE THE RULE OVER YOU”

### Introduction

1. God has ordained three great institutions: the church, the family, and the state. Each of these has a head to which we must submit.
2. This lesson will look at whom we are to submit ourselves and why!

### I. SUBJECTION TO THE GOVERNMENT

- A. Ordained by God (Romans 13:1).
- B. Power to rule, given by God (John 19:11).
- C. Authority to punish evil doer (Romans 13:4).

### II. SUBJECTION TO THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

- A. Jesus ordained as head of the church (Philippians 2:5-11 > Ephesians 1:22).
- B. Jesus given power to rule (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).
- C. Jesus has authority to punish (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10).

### III. SUBJECTION TO THE ELDERS OF THE CHURCH

- A. Ordained by God (Acts 20:28 > 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9).
- B. Pastors rule over the congregation (Hebrews 13:7; 1 Timothy 5:17).
- C. Elders and brethren have authority to excommunicate (Cp. 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; and individuals to cut off from another socially 1 Corinthians 5:11).

### IV. SUBJECTION BY THE WOMAN TO THE MAN

- A. Ordained of God (1 Corinthians 11:3; Colossians 3:18).
- B. Power to rule, given by God (Genesis 3:16).
- C. Men are expected to keep wives in line (Cp. 1 Timothy 3:5; Ephesians 5:22-33).

### V. WHY BE IN SUBJECTION?

- A. Because God ordained them (1 Peter 2:13).
- B. They exist for our good. It is through these institutions that correction is administered by God! (Romans 13:4-5 > Hebrews 12:5-8).

### VI. SUBMIT - EVEN IF THEY ARE HARSH! (1 Peter 2:18)

- A. To save a soul (1 Peter 3:1-2; 1 Corinthians 7:12-16).
- B. Because the Lord set this example (1 Peter 2:21).
- C. And to this you were called (1 Peter 2:21).

### Conclusion

1. There are three God ordained institutions: the church, the state, and the family. Each of these has a head, and if we are in a position of authority, we ought to rule as God would have us.
2. This means that we must submit even to those who rule harshly. In doing so, we fulfill the will of God.





## TEACHING BIBLE BAPTISM TO BELIEVERS

### Introduction

1. When we first become Christians, we must “*desire the sincere milk of the Word*” (1 Peter 2:2); we must learn the elementary things of our faith. However, the Lord expects us to grow in knowledge (2 Peter 3:18); He expects us to leave elementary principles (Hebrews 6:1-3) and move on to meatier things of the Word (1 Corinthians 3:2), and he expects us to be able to teach others (Hebrews 5:12).
2. Every Christian is expected to reach a point where they can teach others. However, we must be careful what we teach and how we teach. Peter refers to the ‘what’ when he says: “*If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God*” (1 Peter 4:11). Paul refers to the ‘how’ saying, “*Teaching every man in all wisdom*” (Colossians 1:28). Matthew Henry commenting on this verse says:

“Men must be warned and taught in all wisdom. We must choose the fittest seasons, and use the likeliest means, and accommodate ourselves to the different circumstances and capacities of those we have to do with, and teach them as they are able to bear” (Matthew Henry).
3. Today more than ever we need to 'teach in all wisdom' because so many people have been deluded. Teaching God's plan of salvation is a fairly simple task if that person has had no previous teaching. But trying to teach or 'unteach' one who has been indoctrinated with error is difficult and requires no small amount of wisdom. In this lesson we will show two things:
  - a. The difficulty in teaching others
  - b. The need for wisdom in teaching. We will demonstrate these things by focusing on one example: teaching Bible baptism to believers.

### I. RECOGNIZING CURRENT ERRORS

- A. Candidates for baptism (thinking modified by view: sacrament, sign or seal).
  1. New born babes (such hold that baptism is for remission of sins, and that baptism is sacrament imparting grace to the unbelieving baby. This is tied up with the belief that man inherits sin).
  2. Young toddlers.
  3. Any adult believer.
- B. Purpose of baptism.
  1. To become a member of a local church.
  2. To follow the example of Jesus.
  3. To show or testify to others that one has been saved.
  4. To be saved! Though this may be recognized as a command for salvation you sometimes find that their belief is more akin to point b, as sin is often said to be washed away prior to baptism (See chart 1).
- C. Mode of baptism.
  1. Water poured on subject (Katacheo = pour).
  2. Sprinkling (Rhantizo = sprinkle).

### II. RECOGNIZING BIBLE BAPTISM

- A. Must be by the authority of Christ (Matthew 28:19).
- B. Must be for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21).
- C. Must be an immersion (baptisma) (Acts 8:38; Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12).
- D. Only believers may be baptized (Mark 16:16; Acts 8:37).

### III. HONESTLY DELUDED

A. Bear in mind these two things:

1. The person may already believe themselves to be saved.
2. They may already believe their baptism to have been scriptural.

B. A shift in perception.

1. The Bible plan of salvation is presented to man A.
2. Man A perceives that his baptism was not for the remission of sins, as he sees what the Bible teaches. A contradiction now exists.
3. At this point, in many cases, a shift in perception, takes place, i.e., the subject may reason thus: *“If the Bible says baptism is for the remission of sins then that is why I was baptized”*. While teaching a believer the truth about baptism you may also be suggesting, unwittingly, that their own baptism was for the very reason you are expounding. By the end of the class a shift in perception has taken place, concerning the reason for their baptism. This shift in perception may now be evident to you but not to them. Now the task of teaching them the truth has become more difficult. How can this situation be avoided?

### IV. A SUGGESTED PROCEDURE

A. Ask, *“Do you believe yourself to be saved?”*

B. Ask them to relate their salvation experience (they may have some long winded, highly emotional story, but be patient and listen).

C. After this, get them to go through it once more but now write down the steps they took (make sure the subject can see what you are writing).

D. Now ask the subject at which point their sins were washed away (there is usually some hesitation at this point).

E. Give them an opportunity to reaffirm what is written down, and give them opportunity to make changes. Below are two examples of what you may have written down:

**Chart 1**

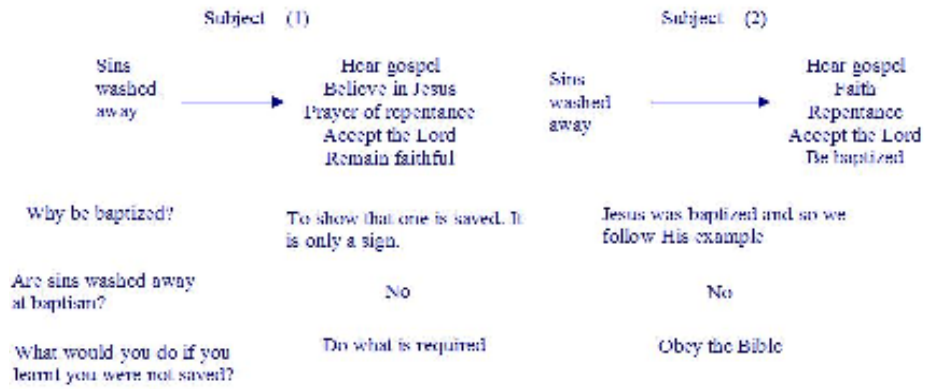


Notice that baptism is included in subject (2) plan but is not connected with the washing away of sin.

F. Now ask the following questions, and write their answers under the plan (do not point out any errors).

1. Why be baptized?
2. Are sins washed away at the point of baptism?
3. What would you do if you learnt from the Word of God that you were not saved? The paper before you may now look something like this:

**Chart 2**



G. You may now proceed to teach the Bible plan of salvation. Even after all this a shift in perception may still take place, but what they said before is there in black and white (Despite seeing their error many still so not obey the gospel!).

**Conclusion**

1. We have seen in this lesson the need for 'teaching every man in all wisdom.'
2. You might want to use the example in the lesson as a template where wisdom is needed in teaching 'delicate' doctrines.



# TEMPTATION

## *The Deceitfulness of Sin*

### Introduction

*“Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8 NASB)*

*“So that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes” (2 Corinthians 2:11 NASB)*

*“For this reason, when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain” (1 Thessalonians 3:5 NASB)*

*“Let no one say when he is tempted, I am being tempted by God; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren” (James 1:13-16 NASB)*

1. The Bible says that all have sinned (Romans 3:23) and, even after we have purified our souls in obedience to the truth (1 Peter 1:22) and continue to walk in the light (1 John 1:7), we still sin (1 John 1:8-10).
2. The passages quoted above (2 Corinthians 2:11; 1 Thessalonians 3:5) reveal that Satan is very much alive, roaming the earth seeking and scheming to devour those who succumb to his temptations (1 Peter 5:8). The last passage (James 1:13-16) reveals that Satan tempts us through our desires.
3. A graphic illustration of how Satan tempt us to sin is seen in Proverbs 7:8-20.

*“For at the window of my house I looked out through my lattice, And I saw among the naive, And discerned among the youths A young man lacking sense, Passing through the street near her corner; And he takes the way to her house, In the twilight, in the evening, In the middle of the night and in the darkness. And behold, a woman comes to meet him, Dressed as a harlot and cunning of heart. She is boisterous and rebellious, Her feet do not remain at home; She is now in the streets, now in the squares, And lurks by every corner. So she seizes him and kisses him And with a brazen face she says to him: I was due to offer peace offerings; Today I have paid my vows. Therefore I have come out to meet you, To seek your presence earnestly, and I have found you. I have spread my couch with coverings, With colored linens of Egypt. I have sprinkled my bed With myrrh, aloes and cinnamon. Come, let us drink our fill of love until morning; Let us delight ourselves with caresses. For my husband is not at home, He has gone on a long journey; He has taken a bag of money with him, At the full moon he will come home. With her many persuasions she entices him; With her flattering lips she seduces him. Suddenly he follows her As an ox goes to the slaughter, Or as one in fetters to the discipline of a fool, Until an arrow pierces through his liver; As a bird hastens to the snare, So he does not know that it will cost him his life. Now therefore, my sons, listen to me, And pay attention to the words of my mouth. Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways, Do not stray into her paths. For many are the victims she has cast down, And numerous are all her slain. Her house is the way to Sheol, Descending to the chambers of death” (Proverbs 7:6-27 NASB)*

### I. THE PATH TO SIN

A. The way this young man took was *his choice* and *he knew exactly where the way would lead him*.

“...passing through the street near her corner; he takes the way to her house” (verse 8).

1. Evil thoughts that lead to sinful behaviour arise in the heart (Matthew 15:19) and when lust is fully conceived it gives birth to sin (James 1:15).
2. But the choice as to whether we sin is always ours, we do not have to sin (1 John 3:9; Romans 6:12; cp. Hebrews 11:24-26). For God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear (1 Corinthians 10:13).

B. This young man took the way under the cover of darkness.

1. We know that we are doing wrong and we know the shame we would feel if our brethren discovered our sin, and so we attempt to commit sin *“under the cover of darkness”*, we do not want anyone to know.

“...in the twilight, in the evening, in the middle of the night and in the darkness” (verse 9)

2. When we hide our sinful thoughts and intentions, we allow it to grow and exert a greater influence.

## II. THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN

A. We may have made a choice to walk the way to sin, but we still have our conscience with which to contend! This is when we start to listen to the promises that sin holds forth.

B. Let us note the seven enticements that sin holds forth:

1. Freedom:

- a. Sin holds out the promise of freedom: *“Life is better this way. You can do what you want, no one can tell you what to do, and life is more enjoyable”* (Cp. Psalm 73:1-16).

“...she is boisterous and rebellious” (verse 11)

- b. It is only when we take a look behind the scenes and we see the families whose lives have been ruined by a drunken husband, the tramps searching for food in the bins whose destitution was brought about by gambling, etc. that we realize that sin is not freedom, it is slavery! (John 8:34; cp. 2 Timothy 2:26).

2. Prevalence:

- a. Sin holds out the promise that *“it will be ok”* because *“everyone else is doing it”*. The prevalence of sin tends to harden the heart (Hebrews 3:13) and it makes sin appear less serious than we thought (Matthew 24:12).

“...she is now in the streets, now in the squares, and lurks by every corner” (verse 12)

- b. But God’s view of sin does not change due to its prevalence (Exodus 23:2; 1 Peter 3:12). God once destroyed all living things upon the earth because of the prevalence of sin (Genesis 6:5-8).

3. Assurance:

- a. She purports to be a religious woman and she seems to be insinuating that, *“there is nothing wrong with it”*. Thus we open the door to sin when we no longer call it sin.

“...sacrifices and peace offerings are with me, today I have paid my vows” (verses 13-14)

- b. But the Lord warns us against this kind of self-justification (Isaiah 5:20; Proverbs 17:15; Matthew 6:23).

4. Care:

- a. Satan tries to sell us the same lies, he tries to convince us that God is unfair and just out to stop us having fun with all those rules and regulations. *“But I really care about you because I won’t stop you having fun”*, he says. Sin, then, seems like a way to find true love and appreciation.

“...I have come out to meet you, to seek your presence earnestly, and I have found you” (verse 15)

- b. But it is a lie! Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44) and he is only seeks to devour you (1 Peter 5:8). Remember that!

5. Pleasure:

- a. When sin promises to delight the senses we get drawn to it more and more like a moth to a flame. We may even say, *“Can something that gives so much pleasure be wrong?”*

“...I have spread my couch with coverings, with colored linens of Egypt. I have sprinkled my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon” (verse 16-17)

- b. But sin would not be so enticing if it were not pleasurable! We should also remember that God has provided legitimate avenues from which we may derive pleasure.

6. Satisfaction:

- a. Do you have a kind of empty feeling? Do you feel that life is somehow unsatisfactory? Sin promises to feel that emptiness and fully satisfy you. Whatever you feel you are lacking, Satan promises a way to satisfy you.

“...come, let us drink our fill of love until morning; let us delight ourselves with caresses” (verse 18)

- b. The truth is, sin leaves you feeling guilty and unsatisfied, and leads to spiritual death (Isaiah 59:2). Only Jesus holds out the promise of a full life (John 10:10).

7. Secret:

- a. This is the final temptation, “*Know one will know*”. How often have we gone down the path of sin because we believe that know one will ever find out?

“...for the man is not at home, he has gone on a long journey” (verse 19-20)

- b. But, of course, God will know (Proverbs 15:3; Jeremiah 16:17). All sin has consequences and, eventually, you will be found out (Galatians 6:7-8; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

## Conclusion

1. This story has a sad ending.

- a. The young man succumbs to the temptation set before him, he is enticed and drawn away through his lust, and he believes the false promises that sin holds out to him and, like a bird flying into a snare, he does not know that it will cost him his life (Proverbs 7:21-23).
- b. The writer then concludes with an exhortation not to turn aside or go astray; for those who do will only find death. The phrase, “*Numerous are all her slain,*” conjures up a picture of the aftermath of a battle where all the dead lay strewn over the battlefield (Proverbs 7:24-27).

2. We will be tempted to sin, and we have seen the cunning devices that are used to entice and seduce.

- a. Never believe the promises that sin holds forth to entice and ensnare.
- b. Do not be deceived, your sins will find you out and you will die.

“*The wages of sin are death*” (Romans 6:23).





## THAT SINKING FEELING

### Introduction

1. In Matthew fourteen we have recorded the occasion when Jesus came to His disciples, who were in a boat in the middle of the lake, walking on water. At first they thought they saw an apparition but Jesus bade Peter to come to Him on the water. Peter began walking toward Jesus on the water but when he saw the wind he began to sink.
2. We also have begun a journey of faith to where Jesus is waiting for us, but perhaps at times there are concerns about us that cause us to start sinking! This lesson will examine two of the most common causes of a person's spiritual decline along with scriptures of encouragement. The final point in this lesson will show us how we can be better prepared for such 'winds' when they arise.

### I. TRIALS AND PERSECUTIONS

#### A. They will come.

1. Some may be surprised when persecution comes (1 Peter 4:12).
2. Jesus indicated that persecution would come (John 15:20).
3. Persecutions come because you are living a godly life (2 Timothy 3:12).
4. Persecutions come because people think you are strange (1 Peter 4:4).

#### B. You may be discouraged by these trials and persecutions.

1. Some were publicly insulted, persecuted, and had property confiscated (Hebrews 10:32-33; 2 Corinthians 1:8).
2. We may suffer an internal struggle (Ephesians 6:10-11) which can cause us to be discouraged (Romans 7:24).
3. Stand firm to receive a reward (Hebrews 10:35-36; 11:24-26; James 1:12).
4. Job - an example of patience under trial (James 5:10-11).
5. An immediate benefit - teaches us to rely on God (2 Corinthians 1:8-9).
6. A warning against shrinking back (Hebrews 10:38-39).

#### C. Should I just curse God and die? (Job 2:9).

1. James says, "*Consider it pure joy*" (James 1:2).
2. Peter says, "*Rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ*" (1 Peter 4:13; e.g. Acts 5:40-41).
3. You are in good company (Matthew 5:10-12).
4. Your faith is being proved genuine (1 Peter 1:6-7).

### II. WORLDLY MATTERS

#### A. Basics.

1. Pagans seek these material things (Matthew 6:32).
2. Some disciples sought only to fill their bellies (John 6:25-26).
3. But God's promise is, "*...seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well*" (Matthew 6:33).

#### B. Family and friends.

1. Yes, we are to honor our parents, care for our own and love our neighbors (Matthew 19:19; 1 Timothy 5:8).

2. But we are not to be yoked together with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14).
3. The Lord must be the first consideration above all others (Matthew 10:37).
4. All those in Christ are brethren (Matthew 23:8) and these spiritual relationships are greater blood.

C. *“When I’m sixty-four”*.

1. Some people become so worried about the future that it becomes an obsession and God is far from their thoughts (Luke 12:13-21).
2. Tomorrow may not come (James 4:14).
3. But where we will spend eternity is the real future we should be thinking about.

### III. A FIRM COMMITMENT

A. A commitment to study.

1. Be grounded in the truth (God's Word) (John 17:17; Colossians 1:23; cp. 2 Peter 1:12).
2. Once grounded move on to maturity (Hebrews 6:1).
3. This will help us stand firm when trials come our way (Ephesians 6:10, 17).

B. Not forsaking the assemblies.

1. To gain comfort and encouragement (Hebrews 10:24-25)
2. To worship God. In times of crisis we ought to draw nearer to God (Psalms 69:17-18; 73:26-28).
3. Be a functioning member of the body (1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Romans 12:4-8).

### Conclusion

1. Should you find yourself sinking into the depths of apathy, fear, doubt, or unbelief, or if you find yourself already beneath the waves, you can walk on the water once more! But only by looking to Jesus. Jesus faced trials and persecutions. Jesus had physical needs and concerns for the future, and Jesus' doctrine, worship and involvement was always being questioned. Yet He did not falter in any respect and is our example to follow.
2. As God's people we ought to be prepared to suffer for Jesus, we ought to be prepared to put Jesus before all others and His kingdom before all other considerations. We also need to be firmly committed to God's Word and His people, always pressing on to maturity.

*“Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and elections sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:10-11).*

# THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A CHRISTIAN

*A Question of Judgment*

## Introduction

1. What characterizes a disciple of Jesus? I ask this question because I believe there are some people who are “*confused*” about this!
2. In this lesson I will share my concerns and remind us of what ought to characterize a person who is a disciple of Jesus.
3. The aim of this lesson is to highlight the responsibility we have to consider both our own and others spiritual status and development, with a view to taking the appropriate action.

## I. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A CHRISTIAN

A. There may be many characteristics that are peculiar to God’s people, but here we shall mention some of the more salient.

### 1. Love.

*“And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8)*

*“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him” (1 John 3:16-17)*

*“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35)*

a. The words *love* and *charity* in these verses are from the Greek word *agape*. This type of love is demonstrated in actions:

1) God so *loved* the world that he *gave* His son for us (John 3:16).

2) Likewise, we demonstrate our love for one another by our actions: a willingness to lay down our lives for the brethren (Jesus being the supreme example), a willingness to provide the needs of our brethren (1 John 3:16-17).

b. It is this love that we are to have “*above all things*” (1 Peter 4:8).

1) This does not mean that we seek love *and nothing else*.

2) The point is this: “*love is the animating spirit without which all other duties are dead*” (JFB Commentary).

*“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)*

*“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40)*

c. This love is also a means by which others are able to identify disciples of Jesus (John 13:35).

### 2. Obedience.

*“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him” (John 14:21)*

*“And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Hebrews 5:9)*

- a. Our love for the Lord is demonstrated in our obedience (John 14:21; cp. 15:10).
- b. Our obedience to the Lord is essential to our salvation (Hebrews 5:9; 1 Corinthians 7:19).

### 3. Holiness.

*“And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:24)*

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14)*

*“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1)*

*“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27)*

- a. Paul exhorts all Christian to *“to put on the new man”* which, he says, is *“created in righteousness and true holiness”* (Ephesians 4:24).
- b. It is this holiness that every Christian must follow or pursue. For without it we cannot see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14; cp. Matthew 5:8; Romans 6:22).
- c. What is this *holiness we are to pursue*?
  - 1) It means we are to be constantly cleansing ourselves of all filthiness, both in mind and body (2 Corinthians 7:1).
  - 2) James says the same thing using different words: *“...to keep himself unspotted from the world”* (James 1:27).

### 4. Teaching.

*“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (Matthew 5:9)*

*“And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word” (Acts 8:1-4)*

*“And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear” (Philippians 1:14)*

*“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude 1:20-23)*

*“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat” (Hebrews 5:12)*

- a. It is evident from these passages, and many others, that Christians have a responsibility to preach the gospel to the lost.

- b. Those who preach peace, the way of reconciliation between God and man, are the “*peacemakers,*” and it is these who are identified as “*the sons of God*” (Matthew 5:9).

5. Prayer.

*“And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luke 18:1)*

*“Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17)*

- a. These are just two of many passages that instruct us to continue in prayer (Romans 12:12; Ephesians 6:18; Philippians 4:6; Colossians 4:2; 1 Peter 4:7).
- b. There are legions of other scriptures that instruct us in the things of which we ought to pray: enemies (Matthew 5:44), more laborers (Matthew 9:38), gospel to have free course (2 Thessalonians 3:1), when afflicted (James 5:13), for each others healing (James 5:16).
- c. Jesus was a man of prayer (Matthew 14:23, Mark 6:46, Luke 6:12; 9:28; 11:1; John 17:1-26).
- d. It is clear that a Christian ought to spend much time in prayer, which is certain sign of one who is in a relationship with God.

6. Study.

*“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39)*

*“And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment” (Philippians 1:9)*

- a. Jesus’ words to the Jews, regarding their search for eternal life in the Scriptures, are applicable to us: we must search the Scriptures to discover the charter for eternal life (John 5:39).
- b. A Christian is expected to:
- 1) Have a *desire for the milk of the word* (1 Peter 2:2).
  - 2) Move on from a diet of milk to meat (Hebrews 5:12-6:3).
  - 3) Continue growing in knowledge (Philippians 1:9; Colossians 1:9-10; 2 Peter 3:18).
- c. It should be obvious, then, that studying the Scriptures ought to be characteristic of every Christian.

## II. MAKING JUDGMENTS

- A. If we are concerned for our own spiritual welfare then we will heed the admonition of Paul:

*“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” (2 Corinthians 13:5)*

1. We all need to examine ourselves and ask, “*Do I possess all the things that are characteristic of a Christian?*”
2. If we do, fine. If we are found wanting then we must take the appropriate action.

- B. If Christians are concerned about one another’s spiritual welfare, then, yes, we need to make some judgments. One can determine another’s spiritual state by their behavior (1 Corinthians 3:1; James 5:19-20; 1 John 5:16).

*“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Galatians 6:1)*

- C. Bearing these Scriptures in mind, we note a threefold responsibility:

1. We must have a concern for the spiritual welfare of others.
2. We have a responsibility to help our brethren.
3. We need to be careful that we are not tempted.

### **Conclusion**

1. There are six things that should be characteristic of every Christian: love, obedience, holiness, teaching, prayer, and study.
2. We have a responsibility to examine ourselves and take any appropriate action.
3. We also have the responsibility to consider the spiritual welfare of our brethren and help them as best we can.

### **Application**

1. As you examine yourself, it is important that you do not consider these six characteristics as a list from which to choose. All six are essential characteristics that every Christian should possess.
2. There is tendency to consider a person spiritual based on three things:
  - a. The fact that they have been baptized.
  - b. The fact that they attend all the services.
  - c. The fact that they are considered a nice person.
3. Consider those brethren that you know well - a friend in the congregation, your own spouse, a son or daughter (you could consider this as a test for yourself) – and ask yourself if they possess all these characteristics. Is your friend, brother, sister, husband, wife, son, or daughter...
  - a. Known for their love toward the brethren? If so, how do they demonstrate it?
  - b. Known for their obedience?
  - c. Known for their holiness? Not niceness but their separation from the world.
  - d. Known for their teaching? Do they always seem to be talking to someone about the Lord? Do they tell you about people with whom they have been talking?
  - e. Known for the time they spend in prayer? This cannot be known of everyone but what about your spouse or your believing children?
  - f. Known for their studying? By this we mean a person who studies for themselves at home. How often do people discuss with you about what they are studying? How often does your spouse or believing child study?
4. If you or someone else does not possess these six characteristics then you should be very concerned about such a person's spiritual welfare and do all you can, in love, to help them develop such.

“Love, obedience, holiness, teaching, prayer, and study ought to be the characteristics of every Christian. In fact, I would ask, ‘Is it possible to hold to the claim of being a Christian without such?’” (Quotes & Things, D. Collins).

## THE CHRISTIAN AND THE MEDIA

### Introduction

1. Most of us watch some television, most of us have radio, and many of us by a daily newspaper.
2. By the end of this lesson, I hope that we will all desire to exercise a stricter control over what we watch, listen to, and read.

### I. NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

- A. They exist to bring news and make money.
- B. The price we pay, and money from advertisers funds their existence.
- C. They report political, religious, and human interest stories.

### II. RADIO

- A. They exist to entertain, bring news, educate, and make profit.
- B. Sponsors and advertisers fund their existence.
- C. Their reports are varied and informative.

### III. TELEVISION

- A. They exist to entertain and profit.
- B. Their existence is funded by advertisers and license fees.
- C. They have a variety of programs to please every viewer.

### IV. ENTICEMENTS TO WATCH, LISTEN, AND READ!

- A. Pornography (lust of the flesh).
- B. Elaborate and plush sets, and a star studded cast (lust of the eyes).
- C. Serials - Coronation Street, East Enders (Pride).
- D. The lure of winning large sums of money (covetousness) and many such enticements.

### V. THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY

- A. Entertaining, informative, educational.
- B. Teach bad morals, untruthful and bias reports, and the use of porn and foul language to entertain.
- C. All three mediums are platforms for gossip and slander.

### VI. BAD PROMOTIONS

- A. Social drinking.
- B. Casual sex.
- C. Bad language.
- D. Course joking.
- E. Blasphemy and profanity.
- F. The use of drugs.

## VII. LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

- A. Scantly dressed women - look to lust, commit adultery (Matthew 5:28). So make a covenant with your eyes (Job 31:1).
- B. Enticed - do not let your heart be drawn toward evil, to eat of their dainties (Psalms.141:4).
- C. An appearance of evil - I will set no wicked thing before my eyes (Psalms.101:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:22).

### Conclusion

1. We view the media as a means to disseminate information, education, and entertainment but the information is not always truthful and is often bias. Some educational programs teach that being gay is okay because it is just the way we are evolving. Much of the entertainment centers on lust and greed.
2. Let us not fool ourselves by saying, *"I can control what I watch"*, or *"I can look, but I'm not tempted because I'm strong"*, or *"You can't leave the world you know"*.
3. Let us have the attitude: *"I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes"* (Psalms.101:3).



# THE CHRISTIAN WALK

*In Newness Of Life*

## Introduction

*“Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:4 NASB)*

1. What does it mean to “walk in newness of life”?
2. In this lesson, we shall examine the content that led to Paul making this statement and then expound on its meaning.

## I. CONSIDERING THE CONTEXT

A. *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?”* (Romans 6:1b).

### Interpreting The Scriptures

“If our interpretation of scripture leads to evil conclusions, then the interpretation is wrong”  
(*Quotes & Things*, D. Collins)

1. Paul had said, *“But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more”* (Romans 5:20b).

2. Some might conclude from this statement, **‘If grace abounded more than did sin, and the sinner finds an abundance of grace in Christ, then, in order to get more grace, one should continue in sin.’**<sup>8</sup>

B. *“God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”* (Romans 6:2).

1. The expression, *“God forbid,”* literally means, ‘Let it not be.’ Paul uses this to express his abhorrence of an inference that has been drawn from an argument (see Romans 3:4).

a. The idea of this expression is, **“Let it not be said that God would ever endorse such a concept.”**

b. The reason for not accepting such a proposition is then set forth in the next part of the verse.

2. After expressing his abhorrence, Paul asks how it could be possible for those who died to sin to walk in sin any longer.

a. The word ‘how’ is an interrogative particle that calls into question the assumption in the objection under consideration because it is impossible that this could be true.

b. *“That are dead to sin”* infers a present condition – we **are** dead to sin. It points back, then, to an occasion when we died to sin or ‘made a commitment to be dead to the practice of sin’. Paul will explain *how* we died to sin later.

### A Child Of God Cannot Sin

“No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God” (1 John 3:9)

c. Therefore, given the fact that we have died to sin, it is illogical to think that we could possibly continue to walk in sin.

C. *“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into His death?”* (Romans 6:3).

1. *“Know ye not”* is better translated, *“Or do you not know,”* and assumes that *they did indeed know* that, those baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into His death.

2. Being *“baptised into Jesus Christ”* indicates a transition; it is a transition of identification and ownership. Outside of Christ we are united to the adversary and identified with his character through sin. In baptism we are enter into a vital union with Christ and are identified with His character through the renunciation of sin.

### In Baptism We Put On Christ

“For all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Galatians 3:27).

Barnes says, regarding ‘putting on Christ’, “That is, they have put on his sentiments, opinions, characteristic traits, etc., as a man clothes himself. This language was common among the ancient writers.”

<sup>8</sup> Truth Commentaries, Romans, Clinton D. Hamilton.

3. The expression “*were baptized into His death*” denotes a relationship to the death of Christ. “*He died for sin and when one is baptised into His death, he becomes one with Him. He died for sin, to put it away, and when we are baptised into His death, we are to be dead to the practice of sin. He was dead to the former state of life in the flesh, and so it is that we are to be dead to our former life to sin... **When He died and we are baptised into His death we died to sin. Therefore, we cannot persist in sin logically. That which restrains us in this respect is that we are dead to it through our relation of being in Christ.***”<sup>9</sup>“
- D. “*Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life*” (Romans 6:4).
1. The word ‘therefore’ is an inferential conjunction that serves a transitional function, and what follows it is based on what has gone before it. Paul is saying, ‘**Because we were baptised into His death**, then it follows that **we are buried with Him by baptism into death**’.
- a. “*The burial with Christ speaks to the reality of death. Buried with Christ through baptism into death demonstrates that we died to the practice of sin as He was dead when He was entombed.*”<sup>10</sup>“
- b. “*By being entombed with Christ by means of immersion into His death, one receives the benefits of His expiatory death. If His death was to remove sin, and it was, it follows that one cannot persist in the practice of sin because this would obviate His sacrifice in our lives.*”<sup>11</sup>“
2. The word ‘that’ indicates purpose or end to which something is done. The idea here is that one is buried with Christ through immersion into death in order that **just as Christ was raised from the dead by the power of the Father, even so we should walk in newness of life.**
- a. “*Might walk*” comes from *peripatesomen*. Here, it refers to “*the whole round of activities in which one is involved*” (Vine). When used with a preposition as it is here with *en* and the dative, it denotes the state in which one is living. In this case, it is **newness of life**.
- b. The ‘newness’ here denotes, “a life of a *new quality*” (Vine).
- c. A Christian, then, is to conduct himself according to the quality of this new life he now has. Consequently, he cannot persist in sin.
- E. “*For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection*” (Romans 6:5).
1. A study of the term ‘planted together’, of the word ‘likeness’, and taking the liberty of filling in the ellipsis, the text is to be understood as saying, “*For if we have become united with Him in the resemblance of His death we should also be united with Him in resemblance to His resurrection.*”
- a. Difficult questions arise if we think that our being “*planted together in the likeness of His death*” and being planted together with Him “*in the likeness of His resurrection*” are literal parallels. However, they are only *resemblances*, and so, such questions are removed.
- b. If, then, we are united with Christ through baptism into His death, and he died to remove sin, then, likewise, **our old man who walked in sin is put to death**. Likewise, if we were united with Christ in His resurrection, who was raised to a new life, then we too cannot live the life of the old man; we live the life of the new man.

**A New Creation In Christ**

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

**Putting Off The Body Of Sin**

“In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ” (Colossians 2:11)

<sup>9</sup> Truth Commentaries, Romans, Clinton D. Hamilton.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

F. “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Romans 6:6).

1. This verse makes it clear what was in view in verse five:

- a. When we were united with Him in the likeness of His death, the old man was “crucified with Him”.
- b. “That” or *in order that* the body of sin might be ‘done away with’ or ‘made inactive’.
- c. “The body of sin” here is not the physical body viewed by itself. The physical body is neither good nor evil. But if one uses it to commit sin, then this involves the whole person, body and mind. This sinful body (person) is the one under consideration. This is the one to be rendered inactive.
- d. This person (the old man who walked in sin) was put to death *in order that* from now on we should not serve sin.

2. A paraphrase of verses five and six would be...

“<sup>5</sup>For if we have become united with Him in the resemblance of His death we should also be united with Him in resemblance to His resurrection. <sup>6</sup>Since we realise this, that the old man was crucified with Him, in order that the old person who walked in sin might be made inactive, then we know that this was in order that we should, from now on, no longer walk in sin”

### Summary

1. Chapter six begins with the question, “*Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?*” It was an earlier statement of Paul that might possibly give rise to such an assumption: “*But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.*”
2. After expressing his abhorrence of such a concept, Paul proceeds to show the impossibility of reaching such a conclusion: **we died to sin, so how can we continue to walk in sin?**
3. Paul now explains *how* we died to sin:
  - a. We were baptised into His death. He died for sin and when one is baptised into His death, he becomes one with Him. He died for sin, to put it away, and **when we are baptised into His death, we are to be dead to the practice of sin.**
  - b. We were buried with Him by baptism into death. Because we were baptised into His death, then it follows that we are buried with Him by baptism into death. **By being entombed with Christ by means of immersion into His death, one receives the benefits of His expiatory death. If His death was to remove sin, and it was, it follows that one cannot persist in the practice of sin because this would obviate His sacrifice in our lives.**
4. The reason we were buried with Him by baptism into death was in order that, just as Christ was raised by the power of the Father, we also might be raised to walk in newness of life. **A Christian, then, is to conduct himself according to the quality of this new life he now has. Consequently, he cannot persist in sin.**
5. The old man who walked in sin was crucified with Christ in order that the old man might be rendered inactive. **This being so, we should, from now on, no longer walk in sin.**

We are now ready to consider what it means to “*walk in newness of life*”.

### II. WALKING IN NEWNESS OF LIFE

A. One might ask, “*If the old man was put to death, how is it that I still continue to sin?*”

1. The text says, “...*that the body of sin might be destroyed...*”. The verb *katargeo* does not indicate that there is no possibility that one could sin. Rather, the idea is that one makes it inactive as an instrument of sin when one kills the old sinful self.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

2. So, it is not that we never sin but that we do not *walk* in sin. Rather, we *walk* in newness of life.
- The word *walk* refers to “*the whole round of activities in which one is involved*” (Vine). It denotes the state in which one is living.
  - One is either *walking* after the Spirit or *walking* after the flesh:

*“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but walk according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:1 NASB)*

- Christians do not continue to walk in habitual sin, but we still sin:

*“This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.” (1 John 1:5-10 NASB)*

B. So what does it mean to walk in newness of life?

1. It means continually *putting off the old man* and a continually *putting on the new man*:

*“But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you **lay aside the old self**, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and **put on the new self**, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth” (Ephesians 4:20-24 NASB)*

*“So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind” (Ephesians 4:17 NASB)*

2. It means we continue to put on the new man through an ongoing learning process:

*“And have put on the new self **who is being renewed through knowledge**, according to the image of the One who created him--” (Colossians 3:10 NASB)*

*“For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:29 NASB)*

*“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind**, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:1-2 NASB)*

3. It means that we continually walk after the Spirit:

*“But I say, **walk by the Spirit**, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16 NASB)*

*“If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25 NASB)*

4. It means continuing to walk in the good works for which God created us:

**Self Control**

We must continually be putting off the old man and putting on the new man. This requires that each one exercise strict self-control.

**Reading And Studying**

The renewing process is a continual one that comes through knowledge. It is essential, then, that we continually read and study the Scriptures

**Guided By The Spirit**

The knowledge we acquire through study is to be our only guide in all that we say or do. Through following His guidance we are able to overcome all carnal propensities.

*“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10 NASB)*

*“So that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Colossians 1:10 NASB)*

**Walk Worthily**

No Christian can be idle for God has created us to walk in good works. By this we are making sure we are walking worthily of the vocation by which He called us.

**Conclusion**

1. When we were baptised into Christ, we were united with Him in His death. Jesus died for our sins and we too, by being buried with Him, have died to sin. It is unthinkable, then, that we should ever believe such an unholy doctrine that says, *“Let us sin that grace may abound”*.
2. Just as we were united with Christ in His death, we were also united with Him in His resurrection, for we were raised to walk in newness of life.
3. Let us, then, strive to walk as He walked and be conformed to His image. We may never become perfectly like Him in this life but we have this promise...

*“See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God” (1 John 3:1-9 NASB)*



# THE CHURCH AND YOU

## Introduction

1. Jesus promised to build one church (Matthew 16:18). These days, it can be difficult to identify the Lord's church.
2. In this lesson, we shall consider several characteristics of the New Testament church which will help us determine whether we belong to the Lord's church.

## I. THE BEGINNING

- A. Jesus promised to build His church, also called Kingdom (Matthew 16:18).
- B. Kingdom to come with power (Mark 9:1).
- C. Power to come with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8).
- D. Kingdom/Church established on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-47).

## II. ORGANIZATION

- A. Each congregation independent (1 Peter 5:22).
- B. Elders in every church (Titus 1:5-9).
- C. Deacons in every church (1 Timothy 3:8-13; Philippians 1:1).
- D. Preachers and teachers (2 Timothy 4:5; Ephesians 4:11).

## III. THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

- A. To preach the gospel (Mark 16:15).
- B. To edify (1 Corinthians 14:26).
- C. Benevolence (1 Corinthians 16:1-4).

## IV. THE CHURCH GATHERS FOR WORSHIP

- A. Preaching (Acts 20:7).
- B. Praying (Acts 12:5).
- C. Singing (Colossians 3:16).
- D. Giving (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).
- E. Breaking of bread (1 Corinthians 11:23-24).

## Conclusion

1. This has been a brief look at the church as revealed in the New Testament.
2. In part two of this lesson we will look at the roles men and women play in the church.





## THE COMPANY OF WOLVES

### Introduction

1. All around us there are religious organizations, their doctrines conflict each has its own way of salvation.
2. It is all too easy to conclude that it is a matter of irrelevance as to what church one attends or what one believes, as long as you are sincere.
3. This lesson will remind us of what God has to say on the subject.

### I. IS THERE TRUTH?

- A. Jesus' teaching was from God (John 7:16).
- B. *"You shall know the truth"* (John 8:31-32; 2 Timothy 3:7).
- C. The church is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15).

### II. WHAT IS TRUTH?

- A. Jesus said, *"My word is truth"* (John 17:17).
- B. Paul speaks of *"Rightly dividing the word of truth"* (2 Timothy 2:15).
- C. The Bereans knew where the truth was (Acts 17:11).

### III. DOES IT REALLY MATTER WHAT I BELIEVE ABOUT JESUS?

- A. Many deny that Jesus is divine.
- B. But Jesus said, *"Before Abraham was, I am"* (John 8:58; cp. Exodus 3:14).
- C. Jesus also said, *"For if ye believe not that I am, ye shall die in your sins"* (John 8:24). Does it matter what we believe?

### IV. AS LONG AS WE BELIEVE THAT IS ALL THAT MATTERS!

- A. Some say we are saved by works (Ephesians 2:9).
- B. Some say faith only saves (James 2:19).
- C. The Bible says, *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned"* (Mark 16:16).

### V. THE SCRIPTURES DEMAND UNITY

- A. Jesus prayed for unity (John 17:10-11; 20:21).
- B. We are baptized into one body or church (1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 4:4).
- C. Division is sinful (1 Corinthians 1:10).

### VI. THE BIBLE WARNS OF FALSE TEACHERS. WHY, IF YOUR BELIEFS ARE UNIMPORTANT?

- A. *"Beware of false prophets"* (Matthew 7:15).
- B. Paul warned the elders of false teachers (Acts 20:29).
- C. They were leading the Galatians astray (Galatians 1:6-8).

## **VII. WHERE WOULD THESE WOLVES COME FROM?**

- A. They would come from without (Acts 20:29).
- B. They would arise from their own selves (Acts 20:30).

## **VIII. THEIR PURPOSE**

- A. Their appearance is harmless (Matthew 7:15).
- B. They may use enticing words (Colossians 2:4).
- C. They may show signs (2 Thessalonians 2:9).
- D. Their desire is to draw away disciples (Acts 20:30).

## **IX. WATCH OUT!**

- A. Test all the spirits (1 John 4:1).
- B. Test them against the word (Isaiah 8:20).
- C. You shall know them by their fruits (Matthew 7:15-20).

## **Conclusion**

1. There is such a thing as truth, as we have seen. We have also seen that it does matter what you believe.
2. This being so, we realize that the church is surrounded by a great company of wolves that we have no guard against. Let us guard against our own thinking! Thinking that all the confusion is only a testimony that we cannot all understand the Bible alike and so it really does not matter what you believe, or what church you go to, because you can still be saved.

# THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

## *Personal Commitment*

### Introduction

“If you thought that living the Christian life is easy, then you haven't lived it!”  
(*Quotes & Things*, D. Collins).

#### 1. With a view to becoming a Christian.

There are many people under the illusion that the Christian life is not very different from their current lifestyle. One lady said, “*If I become a Christian, it just means I'll have to start going to church every week.*” Is this really the only difference between the lifestyle of a sinner and a Christian?

#### 2. A rude awakening.

There are some, no doubt, who have been Christians for many years and have never been taught the kind of commitment that Jesus asks of those who want to follow Him. The consequences can be disastrous:

“When a class of twenty four Christian men and women were shown how their lifestyles were not in conformity with Jesus' teaching, eighteen stopped attending the classes! Of these, ten fell away from the faith. One of the men said, 'I'm sorry, but I thought being a Christian was about attending church and loving one another; I didn't realise it meant making personal sacrifices.’”

It is essential, then, that we all have clear understanding of what Jesus demands of us if we wish to be one of His disciples.

#### 3. The men from the boys.

“There were two brothers, Tom and Harry, and they both had a strong desire to join the British army. They were now eighteen and eligible to enlist, so they went along to the recruitment center. Only Tom actually enlisted. Harry had changed his mind when he discovered that it would mean getting a hair cut, rising at 4 am every morning, etc. He preferred the comforts that civilian life afforded.”

Having considered the demands of being a soldier in the British Army, they each made their choice. It is these demands that put their “very strong desire” to the test, or, as the expression goes, “It separated the men from the boys.”

As we consider the demands of discipleship in this lesson, our own desire to be a disciple of Jesus will be put to the test, and we will have to make a choice about whom we are going to serve - God or the Devil?

[Note: this lesson assumes that the student has already come to believe that Jesus is the Son of God.]

### I. THE INITIAL STEPS

#### A. Jesus demands that our love for Him surpass that of our love for all others.

*“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.” (Matthew 10:37)*

#### 1. It is easy to say and think that we love Jesus more than all others but do we? Perhaps some further elaboration and practical examples will help us decide.

##### a. In the previous verses Jesus says:

*“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household” (Matthew 10:34-36)*

- b. In many cases, becoming a Christian can result in an ongoing conflict with unbelieving relatives, friends, and work colleagues, and there may be occasions when we are tempted to compromise our faith. Here are a couple practical examples:

- 1) Your unbelieving spouse says, “Hey, it’s a beautiful Sunday morning, let’s take a picnic to the park. It won’t hurt if you miss just one service will it?” Before you make your decision, consider this scripture:

*“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25)*

- 2) The following example demonstrates, not only an unwillingness to forsake the assembly, but a willingness to die for Jesus if necessary. The account is a little dramatic but, allegedly, true:

“A Christian woman attended worship at her local church every Sunday without fail. However, her unbelieving husband didn’t like it one bit, and he often asked her to stay at home, and sometimes even threatened her. One Sunday morning, the woman got ready to go to services as usual and the husband said, ‘Your not going, your staying home today.’ When she insisted that she *was* going, the husband pulled out a gun, held it to her head and said, ‘Where are you going now?’ The wife replied, ‘If you pull the trigger, I’m going to heaven. If you don’t, I’m going to church.’“

This woman was willing to die if necessary, and this is the kind of faithfulness that Jesus demands:

*“If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, **and his own life also**, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26)*

<p><b>Context Watch</b> Jesus made this statement after telling the parable of a certain man who prepared a great supper and bade many. Yet those invited did not come, but each one gave an excuse (Luke 14:16-23).</p>
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2. Our love for Jesus is demonstrated in our obedience to His teaching:

*“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; **but he that doeth the will of my Father** which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21)*

*“If ye love me, **keep my commandments**” (John 14:15)*

*“And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that **obey him**” (Hebrews 5:9)*

[Are you ready to commit yourself to obedience to Jesus, even if it means giving up your life?]

- B. Having established that Jesus demands obedience to His commands as proof of our love, we will now examine what Jesus commands.

1. The first command to the sinner is to repent.

*“Then Peter said unto them, **Repent**, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38)*

- a. The word *repent* is from the Greek word *metanoëo*, and it means, “*To change one’s mind or purpose*” (Vine’s).
- b. But merely saying, “*I repent*,” is insufficient, we must bear the fruit of repentance. The following scriptures show that repentance was a fundamental requirement of the gospel.

*“When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: **I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance**” (Mark 2:17)*

*“And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that **repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name** among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:46-47)*

*“Bring forth therefore **fruits worthy of repentance**, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham” (Luke 3:8)*

*“But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and **do works meet for repentance**” (Acts 26:20)*

- c. This begs the question, “What are the fruits of repentance?” After John had said, “Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance” (Luke 3:8), they asked, “What shall we do then?” (Luke 3:10). Here is John's answer:

*“He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages” (Luke 3:11-14)*

- d. Repentance involves turning from or abandonment of sin to a lifestyle that conforms to the teachings of Jesus. This is affirmed and expressed in a variety of terms in the New Testament.

*“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Romans 6:12-13)*

*“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, **who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit**” (Romans 8:1)*

*“And they that are Christ's have **crucified the flesh** with the affections and lusts” (Galatians 5:24)*

*“Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath **ceased from sin**; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries” (1 Peter 4:1-3)*

[Are you prepared to repent, to abandon sinful practices, to live a lifestyle in conformity with the teachings of Jesus?]

2. The second command of Jesus is to be baptised (Mark 16:16). This was the message preached to thousands of Jew at Jerusalem:

*“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and **be baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:36-38)*

- a. The word *baptised* is a transliteration of the Greek word *baptizo*, “*An immersion in water*” (Strong’s).
- b. In the New Testament, those who heard and believed the gospel were baptised for the remission of sins immediately. Today, however, many people seem reluctant to be baptised? This demonstrates an unwillingness to commit themselves to Jesus.

“I had been studying with a man and his wife for several weeks and the studies were going very well. On the third week I discovered that both had been 'baptised' as babies into the Catholic church. Also, in their late twenties, they were 'baptised' into another denomination. On the fourth week we had an in depth study on baptism: its mode, purpose, etc. They both agreed that their previous 'baptisms' were unscriptural, and were not for the remission of sins. On the fifth week we had a lesson on 'God's Plan Of Salvation.' After the lesson, they not only told me they had been scripturally baptised but that they were baptised by a church of Christ minister for the remission of sins!”

[Are ready to obey the Lord's command and be baptised for the remission of sins?]

## II. CONTINUING IN A LIFE OF FAITHFULNESS

- A. Having repented and been baptised for the remission of sins, we must continue to live faithful lives in obedience to Jesus.

1. Christians are exhorted <sup>13</sup>walk in newness of life:

*“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life”*  
(Romans 6:4)

2. To walk after the <sup>14</sup>Spirit:

*“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit”* (Galatians 5:25)

- a. Walking in the Spirit is essential to prevent us falling:

*“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh”* (Galatians 5:16)

3. To walk worthily of our calling:

*“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called”* (Ephesians 4:1)

*“That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory”* (1 Thessalonians 2:12)

4. To walk worthily and faithfully, even unto death:

*“That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God”* (Colossians 1:10)

*“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life”* (Revelation 2:10)

5. Those who do not continue to live faithfully ought not to delude themselves that they are in fellowship with God:

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<sup>13</sup> To "walk" is employed figuratively and signifies, "The whole round of the activities of the individual life" (Vine's).

<sup>14</sup> To "walk after the Spirit" is to live a life dictated by the Spirit. The dictates of the Spirit can be found only in the Bible. Therefore, if we are living by the Bible, we are walking according to the Spirit.

*“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:6-7)*

*“He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked” (1 John 2:6)*

*“And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it” (2 John 1:6)*

- B. Our lives may be divided into three main categories: religious, family, and civil. A faithful Christian will strive to obey all of Jesus' commands that relate to each of these spheres.
1. Remaining faithful in our religious lives. A Christian has numerous religious responsibilities that must be fulfilled, some in the assembly and others in our day to day lives.
    - a. A Christian will not forsake the assemblies of the saints (Hebrews 10:25). There numerous responsibilities that we have toward God and each other.
      - 1) Worship. The Lord desires that we *“come together”* to partake of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34), sing (1 Corinthians 14:26a), pray (1 Corinthians 14:15), give of our means for the work of the church (1 Corinthians 16:1-2), and edify one another (1 Corinthians 14:4, 26b, 31; Ephesians 4:11-12).
      - 2) Mutual care. Another reason we come together is that we might bear one another burdens and provide for each others needs (1 Corinthians 12:26; Galatians 6:2; James 2:2 > 15-17).
    - b. There are other responsibilities that we must fulfil in our day to day lives.
      - 1) Worship. We have a responsibility to worship God on an individual basis. Praying (1 Thessalonians 5:17 > Matthew 6:6; James 5:16); singing (James 5:13); study (Philippians 1:9; 2 Peter 1:5; 3:18).
      - 2) *“Remember the poor.”* We each have a responsibility to help those in need, whether needy saints or needy neighbors (Galatians 2:10; Ephesians 4:28; 1 Timothy 6:18; 1 John 3:17; see Ephesians 2:10; Titus 2:14; 3:8).

[Are you ready to commit yourself to living a faithful Christian life?]

### **Conclusion**

If you are contemplating becoming a Christian, then you need to realise that Jesus demands a full commitment: we are called to love and obey Him above all others, even if it means losing our lives.

This may all sound rather gloomy and even discouraging but there is a “bright side.” This will be discussed in the next lesson, The Christian's Motivation.





## THE DEATH OF CHRIST

*“When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left” (Luke 23:33 NASB)*

*“And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT. Having said this, He breathed His last” (Luke 23:46 NASB)*

1. Once a year, on December 25<sup>th</sup>, the “Christian” community celebrates the birth of Jesus, the Son of God. By contrast, Christians remember the death of Christ every week. The birth of Christ is, of course, very important. But the New Testament emphasis is on the death of Christ. Jesus Himself instituted a memorial that we might remember His death (Luke 22:14-22). This memorial came to be known as the “*Lord’s Supper*” (1 Corinthians 11:20), and was partaken of on “*the first day of the week*” (Acts 20:7).
2. This lesson will magnify the importance of Jesus’ death, by considering the events surrounding the crucifixion of the Saviour.

Why did the Son of God need to die?

Why did He die?

How did He die?

### I. WHY DID JESUS NEED TO DIE?

A. For the remission of sins.

1. The prophet Zechariah said:

*“In that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity” (Zechariah 13:1 NASB)*

2. John the Baptist described Jesus as “*The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29).
3. The apostle John states that Jesus “*washed us from our sins in His own blood*” (Revelation 1:5).
4. When the Roman soldier pierced the side of Jesus as He was hanging on the cross, that fountain was opened (John 19:34).
5. Jesus Himself said that His blood would be shed “*for the remission of sins*” (Matthew 26:28).
6. In the book of Hebrews we learn of the necessity of “*the shedding of blood*” that our sins may be forgiven (Hebrews 9:22).

B. It was God’s eternal purpose.

1. Jesus said:

*“For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me” (John 6:38 NASB)*

2. The Father’s desire for the Son embraced the sacrifice of Jesus as the sin offering for lost humanity.

*“Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you” (1 Peter 1:18-20 NASB)*

3. The eternal plan.

*“Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love” (Ephesians 1:4 NASB)*

*“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7 NASB)*

### C. To Reconcile Man to God

1. It is sin that cuts us off from God (Isaiah 59:1-2).
2. It took the death of Christ to bring us back to God.

*“By abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity” (Ephesians 2:15-16 NASB)*

*“For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Romans 5:10 NASB)*

## II. WHY DID JESUS DIE?

It was a combination of

### A. The love of God.

*“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8 NASB)*

### B. The weakness of man.

1. The betrayal by Judas (Matthew 26:47-48).
2. The denial by Peter (Matthew 26:69-75).
3. The rejection of Jesus by the Jewish nation (Matthew 27:20-26).
4. All of these things brought about the death of Jesus.

### C. The cowardice of Pilate.

1. He found no fault with Jesus (Luke 23:22).
2. Yet he handed Him over to be crucified (Matthew 27:26).
3. Pilate was more concerned about popularity than principles (Mark 15:15).

### D. The humility of Jesus.

1. Jesus came to do His Father’s will (John 6:38).
2. His prayer in the garden of Gethsemane was: *“Thy will be done”* (Matthew 26:39, 42).
3. Paul wrote:

*“Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:8 NASB)*

### E. Our desperate need of salvation.

1. All mankind was hopelessly lost in sin (Ephesians 2:1-2).
2. None was righteous (Romans 3:10).
3. Sin cuts us off from God (Isaiah 59:1-2) and since *“all have sinned”* (Romans 3:23) none could be saved.
4. But Jesus *“tasted death for every man”* (Hebrews 2:9).

### III. HOW DID JESUS DIE?

#### A. Jesus died openly.

1. Paul had said to King Agrippa, *“these things were not done in a corner”* (Acts 26:26).
2. Jesus was executed during the Jewish feast of Passover. There may have been as many as two millions people at Jerusalem.

#### B. He died vicariously (on behalf of others).

1. Paul affirms, *“One died for all”* (2 Corinthians 5:14).
2. Peter states that Jesus, *“bore our sins in His own body upon the tree”* (1 Peter 2:24).
3. Paul says that Jehovah made Him *“to be sin for us even though He knew no sin”* (2 Corinthians 5:21).

#### C. Jesus died painfully.

1. Prior to His execution He was scourged (John 19:1-3).
2. Nails driven into the flesh, then lifted up.
3. Still they mocked Him (Luke 23:33-39).

#### D. Jesus died alone.

1. Peter had denied the Lord (Matthew 26:69-75).
2. *“Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled”* (Matthew 26:56).
3. Jesus knew He would die alone (see Matthew 26:31).
4. Even the Father forsook Him (Matthew 27:46).

“There are four great lessons we learn as a result of the cross. Each point is a fundamental one as regards religion in our day. In fact, were these truths understood and embraced by all, there would be no religious division. Notice carefully the results of the Lord’s sacrifice at Calvary” (J. Ramsey).

### Conclusion

#### 1. The Law of Moses was abolished.

- a. Law ushered in through the blood of Christ (Matthew 26:28).
  - b. We are dead to the Law that said, *“Thou shalt not covet”* (Romans 7:1-12).
  - c. If we are still under the Law, then Christ died in vain (Galatians 2:21).
  - d. Christ is the mediator of a New Covenant (Hebrews 8:6; 9:16; 10:9).
- \*\* Thief on the cross: conditions of salvation.

#### 2. The church was established.

- a. Jesus had said that even the gates of Hades could not destroy the church (Matthew 16:18-19).
- b. His death did not prevent Him from building His church; it was the reason why He could build His church!
- c. On the day of Pentecost the church was formally established and the Lord added the saved to it (Acts 2:47).

#### 3. We now have a hope of being resurrected.

- a. This hope was first glimpsed when Jesus raised Lazarus (John 11:17-27).
  - b. But Jesus Himself being raised assures us of our future hope (1 Corinthians 15:1-58).
4. The spiritual beauty and significance of baptism.
- a. The death, burial and resurrection of Christ is vividly portrayed when a person becomes dead to sin, is buried with Christ in baptism and subsequently raised to walk in a new manner of life.
  - b. It is this baptism that puts us into Christ (Galatians 3:27) where all spiritual blessings are found (Ephesians 1:3).

# THE DEATH OF JESUS

## *A Most Unusual Death*

### Introduction

1. It was a Thursday evening and Jesus was on the Mount of Olives in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:26; Matthew 26:36; John 18:1). Jesus knew what was about to happen (Matthew 26:2, 31-32; John 18:4) and while He speaking to His disciples, Judas came with a large mob from the chief priests and the elders of the people and arrested Him (Mark 14:43-46; John 18:12). He was put on trial before the Jewish Sanhedrin and they pronounced Him guilty of blasphemy and worthy of death (Mark 14:53-64).
2. The following morning He was tried before Pontius Pilate, not on charges of blasphemy, but treason (Luke 23:1-2). After examining Jesus, Pilate declared Him innocent of these charges (Luke 23:13-15). Pilate was, therefore, of a mind to release Him (Luke 23:16) but the Jews demanded that He be crucified (Luke 23:18-23). Jesus was then led away and crucified on Mount Calvary (John 19:16-18, 28-30).
3. But the grave could not hold the sinless Son of God (Acts 2:24) and on the third day He arose (1 Corinthians 15:3-4) and showed Himself alive (1 Corinthians 15:6-8) to many witness (Acts 10:40-41). Following His resurrection, he was taken up into heaven where He has been highly exalted (Acts 2:33, 36) and reigns from the Father's right hand (1 Corinthians 15:25; Ephesians 1:20).
4. The aim of this lesson is to get you think about how extraordinary and unusual was Jesus' death.

### I. JESUS' DEATH WAS ANNOUNCED BEFOREHAND

- A. His death was announced hundreds of years before He was born (Isaiah 53:1-12).
- B. The events leading to His death were foretold:
  1. His entrance into Jerusalem riding on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9; Luke 19:35-37).
  2. His being betrayed (Psalms 55:12-14; Matthew 26:47-50; John 13:21-26; Psalms 41:9).
  3. His accusal and trial (Psalms 35:11; Mark 14:57-59-62; Luke 23:8-10; Isaiah 53:7; Psalms 38:13-14; Mark 15:4-5; Matthew 27:12-19; 1 Peter 2:22-23; Psalms 27:12; Matthew 26:57-63; Psalms 69:4; 109:2-5; 2:1-2; John 15:18-24; Acts 4:26-28).
- C. The details of His death were predicted (Psalms 34:20; John 19:32-36; Psalms 22:16; Luke 23:33; John 20:27; Zechariah 12:10; John 19:34).
- D. Details surrounding His death were foreseen (Psalms 38:11; Luke 23:49; Psalms 109:25; Matthew 27:39; Psalms 22:18; John 19:23-24; Amos 8:9; Matthew 27:45).

### II. JESUS WAS PRONOUNCED INNOCENT BUT STILL PUT TO DEATH

- A. He was put to death even though none of the charges against Him could be proven (Matthew 26:59-60; Luke 23:1-16; Mark 15:10).
- B. He was innocent of any crime...He committed no sin (Hebrews 4:15; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22).

### III. JESUS DEATH WAS HIS OWN CHOICE

- A. His life was taken from Him...he laid down His life for us (John 10:17-18).
- B. He prevented His disciples from intervening on His behalf (Matthew 26:49-52) and He refrained from calling legions of angels to rescue Him (Matthew 26:53-59). He even resisted to Satan's call to end His suffering on the cross before He died (Matthew 27:39-40).

#### IV. JESUS DEATH WAS OVERRULED

- A. His death was overruled. It was not possible that death could keep Him and God raised Him from the grave (Acts 2:22-24, 32).
- B. This was not merely hearsay for He show Himself to many people and gave them many infallible proofs (Acts 1:1-3).

#### V. JESUS DEATH ACCOMPLISHED OUR REDEMPTION

- A. In laying down His life He has saved us from our sins (Matthew 1:21; 26:28; 1 Corinthians 15:3; Galatians 1:4; Colossians 1:13-14; Heb. 1:3; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18).
- B. By His death we are reconciled to God (Romans 5:10; 2 Corinthians 5:18; Colossians 1:22).
- C. Through His death we are freed from the bondage of sin (Romans 6:6, 17-20).

#### VI. JESUS DEATH REQUIRES OUR LIFE

- A. It requires that we live for Him and glorify Him in the way we live our lives (1 Corinthians 6:20; 2 Corinthians 5:15).
- B. It requires that we present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service (Romans 12:1).
- C. As the song says...

#Were the whole realm of nature mine, That were a present far too small; Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all# (*When I Survey The Wondrous Cross*, No. 633, Songs Of The Church).

#### Conclusion

1. Jesus' death was unusual in several respects:
  - a. His death was announced beforehand.
  - b. He was put to death although He committed no sin.
  - c. His death was by His own choice.
  - d. His death was overruled and He was raised from the dead.
  - e. Through His death He accomplished our salvation.
  - f. His death demands that we present ourselves as a living sacrifice and live a life that is for Him and glorifies Him.
2. God has appointed a day in which He will raise everyone from their graves to face the judgement, and the assurance of this is given in the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 17:30-31).

Are you ready for that day? Have you repented of your sins? Are you living for Christ and glorifying Him in the way you live your life?

## THE DEITY OF JESUS CHRIST

### Introduction

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light. There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:1-14 NASB)*

1. There are a number of religious groups that deny the Deity of Christ, but this denial is not confined to sects and cults, there are also many churches of Christ that deny that Jesus was God in the flesh. Wallace says, *“To deny is positively to disbelieve what Christ testified about Himself.”*
2. It is essential that we believe the testimony of the prophets, Jesus, and the apostles.
  - a. John warns that, *“Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also”* (1 John 2:23 NASB).
  - b. Jude says, *“For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ”* (Jude 1:4 NASB). Barnes comments...

*“That is, the doctrines which they held were in fact a **denial of the only true God, and of the Redeemer of men.** It cannot be supposed that they openly and formally did this, for then they could have made no pretensions to the name Christian, or even to religion of any kind; but the meaning must be, that ‘in fact’ the doctrines which they held amounted to a denial of the true God, and of the Saviour in his proper nature and work.”*

3. This lesson affirms the Deity of Christ by considering the testimony of the prophets, Jesus’ claims, and the witness of the apostles.

### I. PROPHECIES ABOUT THE MESSIAH

These are well known prophecies of the Messiah.

#### A. Micah speaks of His **eternal nature**...

*“Now muster yourselves in troops, daughter of troops; They have laid siege against us; With a rod they will smite the judge of Israel on the cheek. But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity”* (Micah 5:1-2 NASB)

1. This is a well established prophecy of the Messiah and he is clearly spoken of one who has no beginning and no end.
2. Barnes says...

*“In the end of the days, He was to go forth from Bethlehem; but, lest he should be thought then to have had His Being, the prophet adds, His goings forth are from everlasting. Here words, denoting eternity and used of the eternity of God, are united together to impress the belief of the Eternity of God the Son.”*

**B. David speaks of His equality with God...**

*“But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain. I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You’” (Psalms 2:6-7 NASB)*

1. This is another well known Messianic prophecy in which He is called the Son of God.
2. When Jesus used the term *Son of God* the Jews understand that He was claiming equality with God (See the article below).

**C. Isaiah clearly declares the Messiah as God...**

*“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6 NASB)*

1. This prophecy of the Messiah declares Him to be *Mighty God* and *Eternal Father*.
2. It is inconceivable that any man could be called by these names; it would be blasphemy to do so and a sin for a man to allow others to call him by such names. Yet Jesus did not correct Thomas when he declared, *“Thomas answered and said to Him, My Lord and my God!”* (John 20:28).

**II. JESUS’ DECLARATIONS ABOUT HIMSELF**

Jesus made some extraordinary claims about Himself.

**A. Jesus claimed to be eternal:**

*“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad. So the Jews said to Him, You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham? Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM. Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple” (John 8:56-59 NASB)*

1. The Jews twisted Jesus’ words here because Jesus did not say that He had seen Abraham but that Abraham had seen His day.
2. Nevertheless, Jesus answered by saying, *“Before Abraham was born, I AM.”* The name *“I AM”* denotes one who is from everlasting to everlasting (Psalm 90:2) and was the name revealed to Moses:

*“God said to Moses, I AM WHO I AM ; and He said, Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” (Exodus 3:14 NASB)*

**B. Jesus claimed to be equal with God:**

*“For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. But He answered them, My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working. For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God” (John 5:16-18 NASB)*

1. Jesus, by calling God *“My Father”* was a claim to be equal with God.
2. As Barnes says...

*“This shows that, in the view of the Jews, the name Son of God, or that calling God his Father, implied equality with God. The Jews were the best interpreters of their own language, and as Jesus did not deny the correctness of their interpretations, it follows that he meant to be so understood.”*



### C. Jesus claimed to be God:

*“I and the Father are one. The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me? The Jews answered Him, For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God. Jesus answered them, Has it not been written in your Law, ‘I SAID, YOU ARE GODS’? If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’? If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father” (John 10:30-38 NASB)*

1. Jesus actual claim was, *“I and the Father are one”* (John 10:30). The Jews understood that Jesus was claiming to be God (John 10:33).
2. Some suppose that Jesus is denying the claim to be God but He is not. Rather, Jesus is simply exposing their inconsistency. Barnes says...

And we may remark here:

1. That Jesus did not deny that he meant to apply the term to Himself.
2. He did not deny that it was properly applied to Him.
3. He did not deny that it implied that He was God. He affirmed only that they were inconsistent, and were not authorized to bring a charge of blasphemy for the application of the name to Himself.

### III. CONFESSIONS OF NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS

The writers of the New Testament had no doubt about Jesus' identity.

- A. **Jesus is eternal.** Writing to the Colossians, Paul says of Jesus, *“He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together”* (Colossians 1:17). The NLT renders this verse: *“**He existed before everything else began, and he holds all creation together.**”*
- B. **Jesus has equality with God.** Writing to the Philippians, Paul says of Christ, *“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard **equality with God** a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men”* (Philippians 2:5-7).
- C. **Jesus is God.** The apostles John, Peter, and Paul refer to Jesus a God:

1. John:

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God**”* (John 1:1 NASB)

2. Peter:

*“Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of **our God and Savior, Jesus Christ**”* (2 Peter 1:1 NASB)

3. Paul:

*“Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of **our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus**”* (Titus 2:13 NASB)

## Conclusion

1. The Deity of Jesus is one of the most basic tenets of Christian belief but the number of those who deny this doctrine is on the increase. It is essential, therefore, that we have a firm foundation in Scripture relating to this teaching.
2. This has not, by any means, been a comprehensive study but simply an affirmation of the Deity of Christ that I hope will stir us to study the subject in more depth. Such a study will ground us firmly in the faith, assure us of our salvation, and prepare us to refute those who deny it.
3. Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God?

a. John says...

*"Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:5 NASB)*

b. If you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, then you need to repent of your sins and be immersed in water for the forgiveness of your sins.

*"He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16 NASB)*

*"Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? Peter said to them, Repent, and each of you be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:37-38 NASB)*

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD?

**Question:** *"What does it mean that Jesus is the Son of God?"*

**Answer:** Jesus is not God's Son in the sense of how we think of a father and a son. God did not get married and have a son. Jesus is God's Son in the sense that He is God made manifest in human form (John 1:1, 14). Jesus is God's Son in that He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Luke 1:35 declares, *"The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.'"* In Bible times, the phrase "son of man" was used to describe a human being. The son of a man is a man.

During His trial before the Jewish leaders, the High Priest demanded of Jesus, *"I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God"* (Matthew 26:63). Jesus responded, *"Yes, it is as you say, 'but I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven'"* (Matthew 26:64). The Jewish leaders responded by accusing Jesus of blasphemy (Matthew 26:65-66). Later, before Pontius Pilate, *"The Jews insisted, 'We have a law, and according to that law He must die, because He claimed to be the Son of God'"* (John 19:7). Why would claiming to be the "Son of God" be considered blasphemy and be worthy of a death sentence? The Jewish leaders understood exactly what Jesus meant by the phrase "Son of God." To be the "Son of God" is to be of the same nature as God. The "Son of God" is "of God." The claim to be of the same nature as God, to in fact "be God," was blasphemy to the Jewish leaders; therefore, they demanded Jesus' death. Hebrews 1:3 expresses this very clearly, *"The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being..."*

Another example can be found in John 17:12 where Judas is described as the "son of perdition." John 6:71 tells us that Judas was the son of Simon. What does John 17:12 mean by describing Judas as the "son of perdition"? The word "perdition" means "destruction, ruin, waste." Judas was not the literal son of "ruin, destruction, and waste" - but those things were the identity of Judas' life. Judas was a manifestation of perdition. In this same aspect, Jesus is the Son of God. The Son of God is God. Jesus is God made manifest (John 1:1, 14).

[www.gotquestions.org/Jesus-Son-of-God.html](http://www.gotquestions.org/Jesus-Son-of-God.html)

# THE EFFECTS OF GOD'S GRACE

*Its inward and outward manifestations*

## Introduction

1. It is one thing to acknowledge that God has been gracious toward us but it is another thing to experience the grace of God in our lives. God has been gracious toward us but do we experience the grace of God?
2. This lesson will consider the inward and outward manifestations of God's grace upon the believer.

## I. WHAT GOD'S GRACE HAS DONE FOR US

### A. Do you remember your former state?

*"Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by the so-called Circumcision, which is performed in the flesh by human hands-- remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:11-12 NASB)*

*"Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-11 NASB)*

### B. What do you have that you did not receive (1 Corinthians 4:7).

#### 1. You were saved by grace:

*"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through the faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:1-10 NASB)*

#### 2. By His doing you are in Christ Jesus:

*"For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God. But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD" (1 Corinthians 1:26-31 NASB)*

#### 3. All the spiritual blessings you have are in Christ:

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory” (Ephesians 1:3-14 NASB)*

## II. THE INWARD AND OUTWARD EFFECTS OF GOD’S GRACE

### A. Humility.

1. We recognise that we are unworthy servants (Luke 17:10; cp. 1 Corinthians 15:9-10).
2. We no longer seek our own glory but seek to glorify God (1 Corinthians 10:31; 1 Peter 4:11; Ephesians 1:5-6; Philippians 3:3).
3. We recognise our continual need for forgiveness (1 John 1:6-10; Hebrews 4:16).
4. We accept God’s providential dealings with us (1 Timothy 6:7-8; Hebrews 13:5-6; Matthew 6:25-33).
5. Inward humility is reflected in our behaviour toward one another:
  - a. We think of others better than ourselves (Philippians 2:3).
  - b. We seek to serve one another (Matthew 20:25-28; 1 Peter 4:10-11; Philippians 2:5-8).
  - c. We confess our faults to one another (James 5:16).
  - d. We seek the welfare of one another (1 Corinthians 10:24, 33; Philippians 2:4).

### B. Devotion.

1. A desire to grow in knowledge (Colossians 1:10; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:17-18).
2. A heart-felt worship (John 4:24; Philippians 3:3; 1 Corinthians 11:27-28; 14:15; Romans 12:1).

*“While He was on the way to Jerusalem, He was passing between Samaria and Galilee. As He entered a village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him; and they raised their voices, saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us! When He saw them, He said to them, Go and show yourselves to the priests. And as they were going, they were cleansed. Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus answered and said, Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine--where are they? Was no one found who returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner? And He said to him, Stand up and go; your faith has made you well” (Luke 17:11-19 NASB)*
3. A desire to be like Jesus (Matthew 10:25; Romans 8:29; 13:14; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 5:17; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10).
4. A resolve to remain faithful (Matthew 6:24; Hebrews 10:23; Revelation 2:10).

5. Inward devotion is reflected in our behaviour toward one another:

- a. In brotherly love (Romans 12:10).
- b. To the ministry (1 Corinthians 16:16). One commentator says, "*That they have devoted themselves to the service of Christians. That is, by aiding the ministry; by showing hospitality; by providing for their needs; by attending and aiding the apostles in their journeys, etc.*" (Barnes).

C. Love.

1. It is a love born out of God's love for us (1 John 4:19).
2. This love manifests itself in our obedience to God's commandments (John 14:15; 1 John 2:5; 5:3; 2 John 1:6).
3. Our love for God is greater than any love we have for anyone on earth (Matthew 10:37).
4. Our love for God means we are willing to bear our cross and even die for Christ (Luke 9:23; Mark 8:35).
5. It is a love that manifests itself in a love for our brethren (2 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 John 3:11, 14, 16, 23; 4:11, 21).

**Conclusion**

1. God was under no obligation to save us and we, certainly, had not done anything to which we could appeal to cause God to want to save us. Yet God had determined from all eternity to save us from our sins through His Son, Jesus. As it is written, "*For by grace you have been saved through the faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God*" (Ephesians 2:8 NASB), and again, "*He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,*" (Titus 3:5 NASB).
2. The grace of God is not just something we acknowledge, it is something we experience; we experience the grace of God as it affects us inwardly and also manifests itself outwardly.
3. The grace of God produces an inward humility, devotion, and love for God that also manifests itself toward the brethren.

Have you experienced the grace of God? If you are not a Christian then you can experience the grace of God today: all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God but God is willing to forgive you of all your sins if you will believe that Jesus is the Son of God, repent of your sins, and be immersed for the forgiveness of your sins.



## THE FALL

### Introduction

1. Sin entered the world through one man – Adam.
2. History has proved that man cannot eradicate sin from the world.
3. God's provision in Jesus is the only way to obtain forgiveness and remission of sins.

### I. GOD'S GIFTS TO MAN...

- A. Made in God's image (Genesis 1:26).
- B. A prepared garden (Genesis 2:8-9).
- C. Rule over every creature (Genesis 1:28).
- D. A healthy vegetarian diet (Genesis 1:29).
- E. Freedom (Genesis 2:15-17).

### II. THE TEMPTATION

- A. The serpent begins by misrepresenting what God said (Genesis 3:1).
- B. The woman corrected his error with a reminder of the consequences of disobedience (Genesis 3:2-3).
- C. The serpent now flatly denies that death would result but promises enlightenment (Genesis 3:4-5).
- D. Through her own lust (of eyes and flesh) and pride, she fell (Genesis 3:6).

### III. A SENSE OF SHAME

- A. Their eyes were opened (Genesis 3:7a).
- B. They tried to cover their shame (Genesis 3:7b).
- C. God made them coverings, as theirs was not sufficient (Genesis 3:21).

### IV. HIDING

- A. They both sought to hide from God (Genesis 3:8).
- B. They hid among the trees (Genesis 3:8).

### V. FOUND AND PUNISHED

- A. They passed the buck (Genesis 3:12-13).
- B. They were all punished (Genesis 3:14-19).
- C. A ray of hope (Genesis 3:15).

### VI. A WAY THAT SEEMS RIGHT TO MAN

- A. God has given us all things in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).
- B. We are tempted, but we do not have to sin (1 Corinthians 10:13).
- C. Sin should cause us to sorrow (Matthew 5:4 > 2 Corinthians 7:10).
- D. We cannot cover our own sin; i.e. seek to establish our own righteousness (Romans 10:3).

E. Many seeks to hide from God, but this is not possible (Romans 14:11-12).

F. Some hide in denominationalism, some behind philosophy, and some behind atheism.

**Conclusion**

1. All of us have sinned and fall short, but God has covered our shame in Christ and we trust in Him.
2. As we walk in this world we see those who are half naked and need proper coverings, hiding amongst the trees.  
Let us do all we can to help them come out from hiding and find clothing that is of God.



# THE FIRST CENTURY *UTOPIAN* CHURCH

## *A Damaging Perspective*

### Introduction

1. The word *utopia* describes an ideal or perfect place or state. Wikipedia says, “*Utopia is a term for an ideal society.*”
2. There are some people who believe that the first century church was a utopian society. In this lesson, we shall...
  - a. Reveal the true picture of the first century church.
  - b. Consider the consequences of this erroneous perspective.



### I. AN INCOMPLETE PICTURE OF THE FIRST CENTURY CHURCH

- A. Some people have a utopian view of the first century church but how did they arrive at such a view? It is probably through a combination of *wishful thinking* and *selective reading*.
  1. One author<sup>15</sup> writes, “*In his letters to the churches, the apostle Paul commended them for excelling in the graces of God; they were known for their faith, love, zeal, giving, knowledge, and intolerance for sin. They were united in spirit, there was a constant feeling of awe as they witnessed the miracles and judgments of God, and there was a certain hope and expectation in the air of Jesus return. The new faith spread like wildfire and many churches were established throughout the Roman Empire.*”
  2. The following passages contribute toward such a view:

*“So then, those who had received his word were immersed; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the Lord's Supper and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to the church day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:41-47 NASB)*

*“And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them. And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need. Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement), and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet” (Acts 4:32-37 NASB)*

*“For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might” (Ephesians 1:15-19 NASB)*

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<sup>15</sup> I have the quote but I don't remember where I got it from.

*“Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me. For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God” (Philippians 1:1-11 NASB)*

*“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father. We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth; just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf, and he also informed us of your love in the Spirit. For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light” (Colossians 1:1-12 NASB)*

*“Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you; for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake” (1 Thessalonians 1:1-5 NASB)*

B. Although these things were true, it would be a mistake to believe that this is the complete picture of the church in the first century.

## **II. A COMPLETE PICTURE OF THE FIRST CENTURY CHURCH**

A. The first century church was not a utopian society; they had to deal with many problems that arose from without and within the church. Note the following warnings:

1. Warnings of persecution:

*“Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also” (John 15:20 NASB)*

*“Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12 NASB)*

2. Warnings of false teachers:

*“But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves” (2 Peter 2:1 NASB)*

*“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears” (Acts 20:28-31 NASB)*

B. Let us now note some of the problems the first century church had to face...

**1. Persecution:**

- a. Acts 4:1-22; 5:17-42 - Peter and John were imprisoned and beaten on several occasions.
- b. Acts 6:8-7:60 - Stephen was murdered.
- c. Acts 8:1-3 - Saul began to ravage the church and Christians were being dragged off and thrown into prison.
- d. Acts 12:1-5 – Christians were being arrested, James was murdered, and Peter was thrown into prison.
- e. Acts 13:44-52 – Paul and Barnabas were persecuted on their first missionary journey.
- f. Acts 14:19 – Paul was stoned and left for dead.
- g. Acts 16:22-24 – Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned.
- h. Antipas was murdered in Pergamum (Revelation 2:12).
- i. A reading of the epistles and the book of Revelation reveals the extent of the persecution that Christians were suffering or were about to suffer (e.g., 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16 > 3:1-5; Revelation 2:10).



**2. Parties:**

- a. There were Jewish Christians who were teaching that one had to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses to be saved (Acts 15:1-29; Philippians 3:2).
  - b. There were also those known as Gnostics. Their teachings are already well known. John refutes Gnostic teachings in his epistles.
  - c. In the church at Corinth there were parties forming around men... who knows what may have happened if Paul hadn't nipped it in the bud?! (1 Corinthians 1:10-13).
- 3. False teachers:** these were everywhere and the epistles contain warnings of false teachers and give examples of their teachings:

- a. Paul was amazed that the churches of Galatia had so quickly turned from the authentic gospel to *“another gospel”* (Galatians 1:6-9; 3:1-5; 5:1-9).
- b. Peter spoke of the false teachers in his day (2 Peter 2:1).



- c. Jude spoke of false teachers who turned the grace of God into licentiousness (Jude 1:3; cp. Revelation 2:14-15<sup>16</sup>; 2:20).
- d. Paul warned of false teachers who would come from without and arise from among themselves (Acts 20:28-30).
- e. Paul warned of Hymenaeus and Philetus who taught that the resurrection had past and had overthrown the faith of some (2 Timothy 2:18).

#### 4. Brethren behaving badly:

- a. The Jewish Christians at Jerusalem reproved Peter for eating with Gentiles (Acts 11:1-3).
- b. Paul and Barnabas had a sharp dispute (Acts 15:36-41).
- c. Paul rebuked Peter and the brethren for their hypocrisy (Galatians 2:11-14).
- d. Euodias & Syntyche were not of one mind (Philippians 4:2).
- e. Ananias and Sapphira told lies (Acts 5:1-11).
- f. Brethren tolerated fornication among them (1 Corinthians 5:1-2).
- g. Brethren were taking one another to court (1 Corinthians 6:1).



#### 5. Just a few more things...

- a. There were those claiming to be apostles (Revelation 2:2).
- b. Those preaching merely for the money (Titus 1:11).
- c. There were also false apostolic letters circulating (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2).



Well even this is not the complete picture because there are many more examples I could list. But what is here should at least give you the general idea - far from being a utopia, the first century church was facing many challenges from without and within.

### III. A DAMAGING PERSPECTIVE

- A. You might ask, *“Well, so what if someone has a utopian perspective of the first century church, what’s the harm in that?”*
- B. Over the past 22 years, I have met several people who had such a perspective of the early church and in each case I could see the damaging consequences of having a utopian perspective of the first century church:
  1. It can lead to discouragement and disillusionment because, in their minds, if the first century church was a utopian society, then it should be the same today. So, as they discover the truth about factions, divisions, encounter disagreeable and immature brethren, etc. they become discouraged and disillusioned. This affects people in different ways. I personally know of two cases (names changed):
    - a. Janet decided to worship at home on her own.
    - b. John fell away.
  2. It can cause a person to become unsympathetic, judgemental, and angry because brethren are not living up to their expectations. I knew a lady like this and she caused friction and upheaval in the church, and the faith of some were overthrown by her behavior.
  3. In an extreme case, it can lead to formation of a new cult! This may seem absurd but some cults have arisen because of one person’s dissatisfaction with the contemporary church. They say to themselves, *“Since the church is not the utopia it ought to be, then I’ll restore it.”* The ICC is an example.

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<sup>16</sup> See Barnes’ commentary for a full explanation.

#### IV. WHAT MANNER OF PERSON OUGHT YOU TO BE?

A. I believe we are all familiar with the characteristics and qualities that we need to be continually developing as Christians:

1. Jesus taught the about the characteristics that everyone must possess to enter the kingdom of God:

*“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:3-12 NASB)*

2. Peter speaks of the qualities we must continually be seeking to develop:

*“Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you” (2 Peter 1:5-11 NASB)*

B. But we must also be prepared to face the challenges and deal with the difficulties of living a Christian life:

1. We need to be ready to stand up for Jesus when we are persecuted (Luke 12:4-9).
2. We need to be ready to make a defense when we are asked to give an account for our hope (1 Peter 3:15).
3. We need to be ready to test the spirits and not just believe every spirit (1 John 4:1).
4. We need to be ready to accept being wronged and defrauded by brethren (1 Corinthians 6:7).
5. We need to be ready to deal with those in the church who sin (1 Corinthians 5:1-2).
6. We need to be ready to bear with the failings of the weak (Romans 15:1).
7. We need to be ready to deal with factions within the church (1 Corinthians 11:19).
8. We need to be ready to preach the truth (2 Timothy 4:1-4) and refute false doctrine (Titus 1:5-11).

C. What manner of persons ought we to be? Someone once said that Jesus was *a man of steel and a man of velvet*. We can all remember events where Jesus shows his velvet side (Matthew 9:18-31; 11:25-28) *and* his steel side (Matthew 21:10-13; 23:13-33). We also must be as gentle as doves and as wise as serpents and persons of steel and velvet:

1. Steel. We must take action against those who sin (1 Corinthians 5:1-2).
2. Velvet. We must be ready and willing to forgive (2 Corinthians 2:1-11).



## Conclusion

1. Some people have a utopian perspective of the first century church that they believe should exist in the contemporary church. Their view is reinforced by (selectively) reading such passages as Acts 2:41-47; 4:32-37; Ephesians 1:15-19; Philippians 1:1-11; Colossians 1:1-12; and 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5. But far from being a utopian society, the first century church faced persecutions, divisions, false teachers, hypocrites, false letters, disputes etc.
2. A false perspective of what the first century church was like and what it should be today is a damaging one because:
  - a. It can cause such a one to become discouraged and disillusioned.
  - b. It can lead to an unsympathetic and judgmental attitude, friction between brethren, and discourage many others.
3. A study of the first century church reveals one much like today's; a church that had to struggle to overcome all kinds of difficulties and challenges from without and within. It is essential that each individual maintain the characteristics required to enter the kingdom of God and develop the Christian virtues to remain useful and fruitful in the Lord; we must put on Christ but we must also put on the armour of God.

*“So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity” (Colossians 3:12-14 NASB)*

*“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:10-17 NASB)*

# THE GENESIS SOLUTION

## Introduction

1. There was time when creation was taught in all our schools but this has now been replaced by theories on evolution! Every year, thousands of children leave school believing that humankind is no more than a product of chance and a descendant of the apes.
2. We also find in these last days that many “*Christians*” have embraced the evolutionary theory.
3. In this lesson we want to re-establish the following...
  - a. Evolution is neither factual nor scientific.
  - b. There is a direct connection between a belief in evolution and the current moral decline.
  - c. The Genesis account is a necessary part of the gospel to be preached.

## I. EVOLUTION IS A RELIGION

### A. The theory.

1. Matter spontaneously came into existence.
2. Life spontaneously arose from dead matter.
3. All life today, including man evolved from one source.

### B. The facts.

1. Scientists are not able to bring something out of nothing.
2. Scientists are not able to bring life from non life (matter).
3. Scientists are not able to demonstrate evolution.

“...No one has ever, in all human history, observed true evolution taking place anywhere. Furthermore, all the facts of science which we can observe seem to contradict the very idea of evolution” (Henry M. Morris).

“Evolution...strains popular common sense. It is simply difficult to believe that the amazing order of life on earth arose spontaneously out of the original disorder of the universe” (George Marsden - Ev'st).

“Evolutionists allege that evolution is a proved scientific fact, based on a multitude of scientific proofs, but they are unable to document even one of these supposed proofs!” (Henry M. Morris).

“Thus, evolution is surely a religion, in every sense of the word. It is a world view, a philosophy of life and meaning, an attempt to explain the origin and development of everything, from elements to galaxies to people, with the necessity of an omnipotent, personal, transcendent Creator. It is the basic philosophy of almost all religions, both ancient and modern. It is absurd for evolutionists to insist, as they do, that religion is science and creation is religious” (Henry M. Morris).

## II. GENESIS, THE FOUNDATION OF GODLY MORALS AND BEHAVIOR

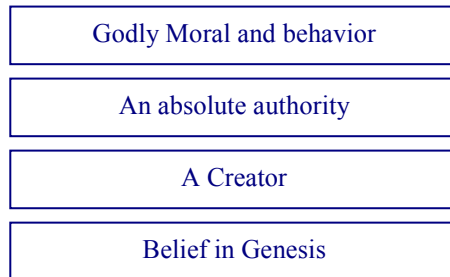
### A. Genesis, a source of faith.

1. Must believe Moses' words if we are to believe Jesus' words (John 5:45-47).
2. The writings of Moses are sufficient to produce faith (Luke 16:31).

B. Genesis, the foundation of Christian doctrine (understanding tied up with source).

1. Understanding sin and death (Romans 5:12-21).
2. Gods sovereignty (Romans 9:1-13).
3. The resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:12-27; 44-49).
4. Marriage (Mark 10:1-12).

**Chart 1**

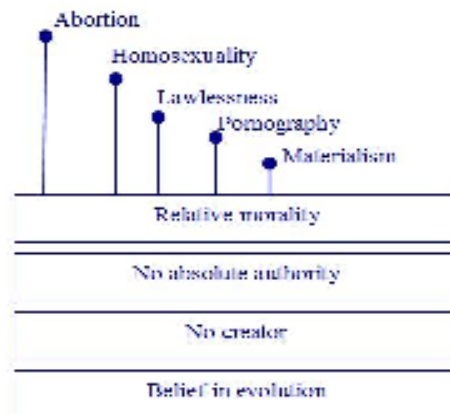


**III. EVOLUTION, THE FOUNDATION OF UNGODLY MORALS AND BEHAVIOR**

A. Evolution, the foundation of human opinion.

1. Death - a natural part of life that has always been.
2. Sin - a violation of one's own conscience.
3. Gods sovereignty - *“whatever will be will be”*.
4. Marriage - invented by man. Legal protection for divorced partner.

**Chart 2**



B. Rejecting God in favor of evolution leads to moral demise.

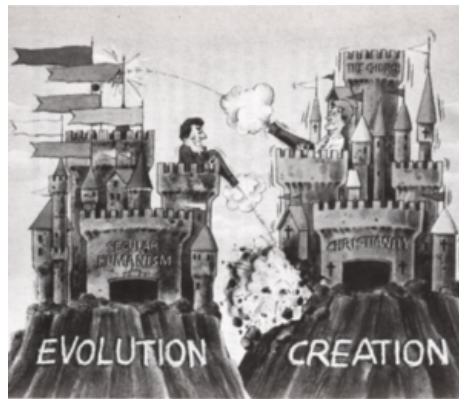
1. These exchanged the truth of God for a lie (Romans 1:21-32). Though this exchange is in reference to idols and false gods, we note that most false religions are built upon an evolutionary concept.
2. This description, ungodliness, is what we might typically expect of a generation that has embraced evolution (1 Timothy 3:1-4).



## IV. THE GENESIS SOLUTION

### A. The focus of attack

#### Chart 3



1. Evolutionists attack and ridicule Genesis, and so destroy the very foundation on which Christian moral stand.
2. Christians tend to attack the issues rather the foundation.
3. Even if an issue is won e.g. abortion, the next generation may reinstate it as the foundation is still there.

### B. Foundational preaching.

1. Peter preached to Jews who already stood on the Genesis foundation (Acts 2:14-36).
2. Paul, preaching to the Athenians, laid the Genesis foundation (Acts 17:16-34).

### Conclusion

1. Jesus never once suggested that the account of Genesis was anything but an actual account of events. The New Testament writers also refer many times to Genesis to establish a doctrine, and they treat the accounts as factual; In fact, Paul speaks against myths and fables!

*“Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth” (Titus 1:4).*

2. As Christians, we must believe the Genesis account is true, and so teach it, where appropriate.
3. We have established the fact that there is a direct connection between a belief in evolution and moral demise. This being so, Christians must be ready to attack and defend Christian ethics on a foundational level, and not merely fight the issues.

Read 1 Timothy 6:20-21



## THE GREAT CONFESSION

*An Exegesis of Mathew 16:13-19*

### Introduction

1. After the miracle of feeding four-thousand people with seven loaves and a few little fish (Matthew 15:32-38), Jesus and His disciples came to Magdala (Matthew 16:39).
  - a. It was in Magdala that the Pharisees and Sadducees asked for a sign from heaven **to prove He was the Messiah** (Matthew 16:1).
2. From Magdala, they sailed across the Sea of Galilee to Gergesa. Jesus then warned His disciples to beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matthew 16:4-12).
  - a. This doctrine of which they were to beware is hypocrisy (Luke 12:1).
  - b. The warning came just after His encounter with the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matthew 16:1-4). They had asked for a sign as proof of His identity yet He had already performed many signs.
3. From Gergesa, they traveled toward Caesarea Philippi (Matthew 16:13).
  - a. It was while ‘by the way’ to the towns (Mark 8:27) that Jesus questioned the disciples regarding His identity (Matthew 16:13ff).
4. Why did Jesus ask this question?
  - a. Because of what was in His mind:

*“From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day” (Matthew 16:21)*
  - b. As Jesus considered His coming baptism of suffering, He also had in view the reasons He would allow Himself to endure such:

*“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who **for the joy that was set before him** endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2)*

### I. WHOM DO MEN SAY THAT I THE SON OF MAN AM? (Matthew 16:13-14)

- A. Several prevalent views among the people:
  1. That He was John the Baptist raised from the dead.

*“At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him” (Matthew 14:1-2)*
  2. That He was Elijah, the pre-runner to the Messiah (See Malachi 4:5).
  3. That He was Jeremiah:
    - a. Some supposed that he was the prophet alluded to by Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15 (See Gill).
    - b. Or that he was risen from the dead or transmigrated into another body (See Gill).
  4. That He was one of the other prophets. The correct sense is given by Mark, “...or as one of the prophets” (Mark 6:15), i.e., He was a prophetic person, resembling those of old.

B. At first, many had confessed Jesus as the Messiah (John 1:40-41; 4:28-29; cp. 9:42). But as Dummelow says:

“This belief no longer existed. Those who held it had abandoned it because of His continued refusal to declare Himself and to do what was expected of the Messiah” (J.R. Dummelow).

## II. BUT WHOM SAY YE THAT I AM? (Matthew 16:15-16)

A. Jesus makes no comment concerning the people’s views but seeks now their own personal view.

1. The question is put to all of them but, characteristically, Peter here speaks for them all.
2. Without any hesitation, they confess, “*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*” (Matthew 16:16).

B. Much has been made of the fact that the word *Peter* means ‘rock,’ and have gone on to say that it is upon Peter that the church is built. We deny this because:

1. Jesus goes on to say that He would give them the keys of the kingdom, making him the door opener, not the foundation.
2. The word *Peter* actually refers to a small rock or pebble, while the word *rock* that Jesus uses, upon which the church is built, means ‘a ledge,’ i.e., A Huge Foundation.
3. We conclude, then, that the *rock* upon which the church is built is Peter’s confession, “*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*” Those who believe this fact and confess it are added to His church (Acts 8:36-38 > Romans 10:8-10 > Acts 2:47).

“*For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ*” (1 Corinthians 3:11)

## III. AND UPON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH (Matthew 16:18)

A. The figure employed by Jesus, at first glance, may not seem to “*work!*”

1. Many people hold to the misconception that a ‘church’ is a physical building, thus, the concept of a church being built on a foundation is easily accepted.
2. However, as we should all know, the *church* is a reference to people, those ‘called out.’ With this in mind, Jesus is saying, ‘Upon this foundation I will build my assembly of people.’ The figure doesn’t seem to “*work*” does it?
3. Robertson clears this up for us:

“If one is puzzled over the use of “building” with the word *ekklhsia* it will be helpful to turn to 1Pe 2:5. Peter, the very one to whom Jesus is here speaking, writing to the Christians in the five Roman provinces in Asia (1Pe 1:1), says: “You are built a spiritual house” (*oikodomeisqe oikov pneumatikov*). It is difficult to resist the impression that Peter recalls the words of Jesus to him on this memorable occasion. Further on (1Pe 2:9) he speaks of them as an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, showing beyond controversy that Peter’s use of building a spiritual house is general, not local. This is undoubtedly the picture in the mind of Christ here in Mat 16:18. It is a great spiritual house, Christ’s Israel, not the Jewish nation, which he describes” (Robertson’s Word Pictures)

B. Concerning His church, Jesus says, “*And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*” (Matthew 16:18). Speculations abound as to what this phrase means but the meaning is clear from other Scriptures:

1. The word *hell* is incorrect; there is actually no such word!

“...Gehenna was a well-known valley, near Jerusalem, in which the Jews in their idolatrous days had sacrificed their children to the idol Moloch, in consequence of which it was condemned to receive the offal and refuse and sewage of the city, and into which the bodies of malefactors were cast and where to destroy the odor and pestilential influences, continual fires were kept burning. Here fire, smoke, worms bred by the corruption, and other repulsive features, rendered the place a horrible one, in the eyes of the Jews. **It was a locality with which they were as well acquainted** as they were with any place in or around the city” (J.W. Hanson, D.D.).

- a. The actual Greek word used here is *hades* and is translated ‘Hades.’ It means ‘the grave.’
- b. Many translations correct this error.

2. The (corrected) term ‘gates of Hades’ is explained:

“The gates of walled cities were often popular resorts where people talked or arranged to meet. In time it became a convenient place for princes and judges to discharge their official duties in the administration of justice (Deuteronomy 16:18; 25:7; Joshua 20:4; Ruth 4:1; Job 5:4; 31:21; Psalms 77:5; Proverbs 22:22; 31:23; Jeremiah 38:7; Lamentations 5:14; Amos 5:12; Zechariah 8:16). Thus, the word ‘gate’ became a synonym for power or authority. It is in this sense that it is used here and means, ‘The power of Hades shall not prevail against the church that Christ should establish’” (Quotes & Things, D. Collins).

- a. The meaning here is that, ‘the power of death would not prevail against the church.’
- b. How fulfilled?

1) In Jesus, the head of the church:

*“Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power” (Acts 2:23-24)*

2) In believers:

*“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:14-15)*

*“For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; **death hath no more dominion over him**” (Romans 6:5-9)*

*“So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory” (1 Corinthians 15:54-55)*

## Conclusion

1. At first, many people were willing to accept Jesus as the long awaited Messiah.
2. But now we reach a point where the former opinions of the masses had changed. Despite having taught like no other man, they wonder who this Jesus could be. Despite all the miracles He performed, they ask for a sign from heaven to prove his identity.

3. And now in the way to Caesarea, Jesus looking ahead to the baptism of suffering He must soon endure. Will it all be vain? Will there be anyone who believes in Him?
4. Jesus confronts His disciples with the question, "*Who do you say that I am?*" Without hesitation, Peter answers, "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*" The disciples have not been swayed by the crowds, they not been influenced by the leaven of the Sadducees and Pharisees.
5. No, Jesus would not die in vain, there was hope after all; there were those who acknowledged and confessed Him as the Christ, the Son of the living God, and He would add to His church those who made the same confession, and even the power of death would not prevail against His church.

## THE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM

### Introduction

#### ***Greatness In The World***

Who are the people that are respected in society? Who are the people that are thought of as being great? Generally speaking, it is the rich and powerful section of society that are given the most respect and thought of as being great.

#### ***Greatness In The Kingdom***

Likewise, who are the people most respected and hailed as being the greatest in the kingdom of God? Is it, again, those who are successful in the world? Is it those who have the most responsibility in a local church?

#### ***The Desire To Be Great***

Each of us, I believe, has a desire to be great. We would rather a **good name** than a bad. We would rather be thought of as **useful** than useless. We would rather be noted for being **successful** than a failure.

#### ***How Do We Measure Greatness?***

Greatness is measured either according to the rule of the world or the rule of the Bible. The rule by which we measure greatness will ultimately determine our behaviour in achieving that greatness. Further, it is possible for an individual to seek greatness in the world and the kingdom by either two different rules or the same rule.

#### ***Achieving Greatness***

1. One may measure greatness according to the rule of the world (which we shall call the **World Rule**).
2. One may measure greatness according to the rule of the Scriptures (which we shall call the **Scripture Rule**).

On which rule or rules should we base our behavior in order to achieve greatness in the world and the kingdom of God? The answer depends on whether you are trying to achieve greatness in the sight of men or God. This lesson is for those who desire to achieve greatness in the sight of God.

### I. DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR

- A. Jesus wrote to the church in Sardis saying, *“I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead”* (Revelation 3:1).
- B. Sardis imagined itself to be great, but by what rule? It was certainly not by the rule of Scripture for, when measured by that rule, Jesus says, *“You are dead”* (Ibid)
- C. When we strive for greatness according to the World Rule the results are fatal.

### II. STRIVING FOR GREATNESS IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD ACCORDING TO THE WORLD RULE

- A. James and John sought greatness in the kingdom through *position*.

*“Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him. And He said to her, What do you wish? She said to Him, **Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left**”* (Matthew 20:20-21 NASB)

- B. James and John sought greatness in the kingdom through exercising of *power*.

*“When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem; and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him. But they did not receive Him, because He was travelling toward Jerusalem. When His disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, **do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?** But He turned and rebuked them, and said, *You do not know what kind of spirit you are of*”* (Luke 9:51-55 NASB)

C. The Corinthians supposed that greatness in the kingdom depended upon *association with the most prominent preacher* (1 Corinthians 4:6).

*“Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:12 NASB)*

D. The Corinthians supposed that *superior knowledge* or *superior faith* elevated them to a position of greatness in the kingdom of God (Romans 14:1-23; 1 Corinthians 8:1-13).

*“Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies” (1 Corinthians 8:1 NASB)*

E. Some may seek greatness in the kingdom through a pretended *superior morality*. There were those today, even as there were those in the first century, that seek to puff themselves up through teaching a *supposed* higher standard of morality.

1. That remaining celibate is a sign of superior spirituality (Cp. 1 Timothy 4:3a).

2. That abstaining from meats is a sign of superior spirituality (Cp. 1 Timothy 4:3b).

3. That cutting themselves off from the world is a sign of superior spirituality (Cp. Matthew 5:14-16).

F. The religious leaders of Jesus’ day regarded outward displays as evidence of their greatness in God’s kingdom (Matthew 6:1-18) concerning alms giving, prayer, and fasting.

G. Simon the sorcerer sought to buy greatness in the kingdom (Acts 8:18-19).

### III. THE TRUE MEASURE OF GREATNESS ACCORDING TO THE RULE OF SCRIPTURE

A. The false measure of greatness.

1. Wealth.

a. The love of money is a hindrance to true greatness (Matthew 19:16-24).

b. The love of money chokes the word (Matthew 13:22).

c. The accumulation of wealth does not make one great (Matthew 6:19-20).

2. Position.

a. Jesus teaches that seeking high positions does not make one great (Mark 10:42-43).

3. Power.

a. Jesus forbids *lording* it over others (Mark 10:42-43).

b. Elders are forbidden to *lord it* over those entrusted to them (1 Peter 5:1-3).

B. What must I do to be great?

1. You must keep the commandments of God and teach others to do the same (Matthew 5:19).

2. You must become a servant of all (Matthew 20:26).

### Conclusion

1. Every Christian should seek to be great in the kingdom of God and in the world, but the greatness we seek is not through the accumulation of wealth, position, and power.

2. True greatness in the sight of God comes through our obedience in keeping and teaching the commandments of God, and through our service to others.



## THE HIDING PLACE

### Introduction

1. In times of danger many seek a place to hide. When the Philistines gathered their forces at Michmash to fight against Israel, who were at Gilgal, many of Saul's men fled and hid in caves (1 Samuel 13:5-6).
2. A hiding place is somewhere you can feel safe, a place where you are among friends. Many men and women today attempt to run away from their responsibilities and hide from God.

### I. YOU CANNOT HIDE IN THE WORLD

- A. Adam and Eve sinned and when they heard the Lord coming they hid among the trees (Genesis 3:9-10) but the Lord called and they made their defense (Genesis 3:9-10).
- B. Jonah was called by God to go and preach to Nineveh but he ran away, thinking to go and hide in Tarshish (Jonah 1:1-3) but when the great fish vomited Jonah out onto dry land the Lord was there with the same command (Jonah 2:10-3:1).
- C. But there is nowhere to run and hide for,

*“The Lord fills the heaven and earth” (Jeremiah 23:24).*

### II. YOU CANNOT HIDE IN HYPOCRISY

- A. Some try to ignore sin. The Jews of Isaiah's day appeared to, *“seek the Lord day by day”*. They seemed eager to know God's ways, but they still exploited their workers and at the end of a fast they argued and became violent (Isaiah 58:1-4). In Jeremiah's day the people trusted in the temple and continued in sin: *“We are safe”*, they cried (Jeremiah 7:1-11). The Lord's answer to this hypocrisy was *“I have been watching”*.
- B. The Pharisees in Jesus' day did not so much ignore sin as deny sin! They deceived themselves that they were righteous (read Luke 18:9-12) but Jesus said to them, *“You are the ones who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts...on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness”* (Luke 16:15 > Matthew 23:28).

### III. YOU CANNOT HIDE BEHIND PHILOSOPHY

- A. Some say we cannot know anything for certain (agnostics). They put it this way, *“We know enough about reality in order to state that nothing can be known about reality”*. How then can they know that their own statement is true? The truth is people, who say they do not know, do not want to know.
- B. Some deny that God exists (atheists). However, the apostle Paul answers both the agnostic and the atheist in these words:  
*“Since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - His eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse” (Romans 1:20).*
- C. Worst of all some men think they are God. In Isaiah's day the city of Babylon said of itself, *“I am, and there is none besides me”* (Isaiah 47:10). The ruler of Tyre said, *“I am a god...”* (Ezekiel 28:2). As Herod spoke the crowd called out...

*“This is the voice of a god not a man” (Acts 12:22).*

### IV. FOUND OUT

- A. You can hide in the world but like Adam you will be called to give an account (Romans 14:12) for your sin, and you will have none to blame.
- B. If you hide your sin in hypocrisy you only deceive yourself and others, but God knows the secrets of our hearts (Psalms 44:21) and God will judge the secrets of our hearts by Jesus Christ on that day (Romans 2:16).

- C. The great philosophers have denied God and the preaching of the cross is foolishness to them (1 Corinthians 1:21). However, God's existence has always been clearly seen in nature. On that day the philosophers will be the fools (Cp. Psalms 14:1).

#### **V. THE HIDING PLACE**

- A. We are called out of the world (2 Corinthians 6:17) to hide in the shelter of His tabernacle (Psalms 27:5).
- B. Our hiding place is in the shelter of His presence (Psalms 31:20) to worship Him, not in hypocrisy, but in spirit and truth (John 4:24).
- C. Men may hide behind the name of philosophy but there is only one name under heaven by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12) and it is in that name that our lives are hidden in God - The name of Christ (Colossians 3:3).

#### **Conclusion**

1. There is nowhere in this world you can run and hide for God is present everywhere. You cannot hide your thoughts and motives from God because He knows all things and you cannot remain hidden in the grave (philosophers) for God is all powerful and will raise each one to give an account.
2. Do not hide among those things which only offer a temporary shelter and comfort, but, "*come out from among them*" and take refuge in Jesus the rock of our salvation.

# THE HOPE OF YOUR CALLING

*Grounds and Effects*



## Introduction

### 1. Paul's prayer for the Ephesians:

*"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him (the eyes of your heart being enlightened), so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (Ephesians 1:17-18 NASB)*

#### a. Paul's prayer is that God will enlighten our minds:

"Paul's prayer is that God give each one of us a spiritual disposition to receive wisdom and understanding (that comes through the hearing of the word of God) that grows out of a knowledge of Him. Possessing such a disposition leads to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the eternal truths of the gospel" (*Quotes & Things, Commentary*, D. Collins)

#### b. Paul's prayer is that we come to understand "what is the hope of His calling":

"The apostle desires that we come to a greater understanding of the hope or expectation to which God has called us, the everlasting glory that we shall share in Christ, and the inexpressible power that He exercised toward us in regards to our salvation" (*Quotes & Things, Commentary*, D. Collins)

### 2. Peter charges us...

*"But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to give a defence to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence" (1 Peter 3:15 NASB)*

#### a. Every Christian must be ready to explain his hope and the basis of it.

#### b. This supposes that we understand "what is the hope of your calling."

### 3. In this lesson we shall...

- |   |             |
|---|-------------|
| a. Give the Biblical meaning of hope.       | [Edify]     |
| b. Reveal the Christian hope.               | [Inspire]   |
| c. State the grounds of the Christian hope. | [Ground]    |
| d. Show the effect of hope.                 | [Practical] |

## I. WHAT IS HOPE?

### A. The English word 'hope' has several shades of meaning: we use the word hope to express...

#### 1. Wishful thinking...

"My friend asked, 'Do you think it will rain this weekend?' I responded, 'I hope not! We plan to have a picnic in the park, so I really hope it doesn't rain.' But, having previously checked the weather report, I know there is a 99% chance of rain. So my response, 'I hope not!' is nothing more than wishful thinking."

#### 2. Optimism...

"I have a friend who, when someone is going through a difficult time, says, 'Cheer up, you'll get through this, things won't turn out so bad.' My friend's optimism inspired hope and, while his predictions may sometimes come true, they don't always!"

3. Deep longing...

“‘I hope she will fall in love with me.’ This hope is a deep longing.”

B. The following definitions refer to the usage of the word ‘hope’ in the Scriptures.

1. Vine says, “*Favourable and confident expectation.*”

2. ISBE says, “*Expectation of some good thing.*”

3. D. Collins says, “*A longing [for something unseen] accompanied by a confident expectation of its fulfilment. The Christian’s hope is to be with Jesus in heaven throughout eternity, and is confident that this expectation will be realized. The ground of this hope is his faith.*”

4. Mike Willis says, “[*Hope is*] **a confident expectation unclouded by doubt**” (Truth Commentaries, Galatians).

5. We hope in things not seen:

“*For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees?*” (Romans 8:24 NASB)

**Transition Statement:** “*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen*” (Hebrews 11:1 NASB).

## II. THE CHRISTIAN’S HOPE

A. Some of the things for which we hope.

1. A resurrection from the dead:

“*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so **God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.** For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, **and the dead in Christ will rise first**” (1 Thessalonians 4:14-16 NASB)*

“*The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death*” (Proverbs 14:32 KJV)

2. For Christ’s appearing:

“*instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, **looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus**” (Titus 2:12-13 NASB)*

3. To become like Jesus:

“*Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. **We know that when He appears, we will be like Him,** because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1 John 3:2-3 NASB)*

“*For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; **who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory,** by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself” (Philippians 3:20-21 NASB)*

4. For eternal life:

“*He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to **the hope of eternal life**” (Titus 3:5-7 NASB)*

B. The foundation of our hope.

1. The source of our hope is God:

*“Now **the God of hope**<sup>17</sup> fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.” (Romans 15:13 KJV)*

*“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and **Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope**” (1 Timothy 1:1 KJV)*

*“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, **who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace**” (2 Thessalonians 2:16 NASB)*

“How happy is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in Jehovah his God” (Psalms 146:5)

2. God is the source of our hope because His Character inspires confidence and hope:

a. God is faithful:

*“**God is faithful**, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” (1 Corinthians 1:9 NASB)*

*“If we are faithless, **He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.**” (2 Timothy 2:13 NASB)*

*“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, **for He who promised is faithful**” (Hebrews 10:23 NASB)*

*“Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall **entrust their souls to a faithful Creator** in doing what is right.” (1 Peter 4:19 NASB)*

*“**Faithful is He who calls you**, and He also will bring it to pass.” (1 Thessalonians 5:24 NASB)*

b. God does not lie:

*“In hope of eternal life, **which God, that cannot lie**, promised before the world began” (Titus 1:2 KJV)*

*“In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things [the promise and the oath of God] **in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.**” (Hebrews 6:17-18 NASB)*

3. We learn about God’s faithfulness in the Scriptures (Psalms 119:49):

a. What is written is written to give us comfort and hope:

*“We will not conceal them from their children, But tell to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, And His strength and His wondrous works that He has done. For He established a testimony in Jacob And appointed a law in Israel, Which He commanded our fathers That they should teach them to their children, That the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born, That they may arise and **tell them to their children, That they should put their hope in God** And not forget the works of God, But keep His commandments” (Psalms 78:4-7 NASB)*

*“For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, **so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope**” (Romans 15:4 NASB)*

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<sup>17</sup> “The God who inspires or produces the Christian hope” (Barnes)

b. Believing the promises of God inspires hope:

*“And now I am standing trial **for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers**” (Acts 26:6 NASB)*

*“Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, **in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago**” (Titus 1:1-2 NASB)*

c. God’s promise caused Abraham to “*hope against hope*”<sup>18</sup>:

*“In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, **SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE.**” (Romans 4:18 NASB)*

4. The Scriptures lead to faith...

a. ...and hope is an outgrowth of faith:

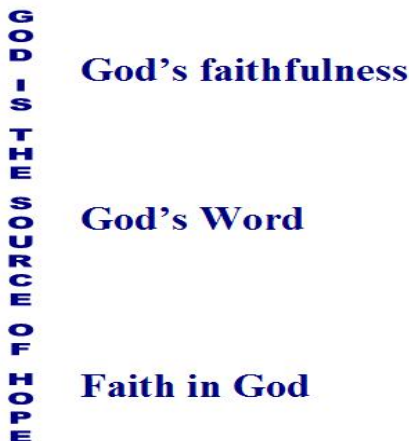
*“For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness.” (Galatians 5:5 NASB)*

“...what Paul is saying is that we patiently wait for the everlasting life which is the hope resulting from having obtained righteousness through faith in Christ” (Truth Commentaries, Galatians, Mike Willis).

b. So an increase in faith strengthens our hope. Faith comes from hearing the word of God:

*“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.” (Romans 10:17 NASB)*

**Chart #1 ‘Things That Inspire Hope’**



**III. THE EFFECTS OF HOPE**

A. Admonitions:

1. God’s lovingkindness toward us is in proportion to the measure of hope we exercise:

*“Let Your lovingkindness, O LORD, be upon us, **According as we have hoped in You**” (Psalms 33:22 NASB)*

<sup>18</sup> **Who against hope** - Who against all apparent or usual ground of hope. He refers here to the prospect of posterity; see Rom. 4:19-21.  
**Believed in hope** - Believed in what was promised to excite his hope. Hope here is put for the object of his hope - what was promised” (Barnes)

2. We are not to be moved away from our hope:

*“And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach-- if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister” (Colossians 1:21-23 NASB)*

3. Abandoning hope leads to evil:

*“But they will say, 'It's hopeless! For we are going to follow our own plans, and each of us will act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart'” (Jeremiah 18:12 NASB)*

B. What hope does:

1. Hope incurs God’s favor:

*“The LORD favors those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy” (Psalms 147:11 NASB)*

2. Hope defeats despair:

*“Do not be a terror to me; You are my hope in the day of evil” (Jeremiah 17:17 NASB)*

*“Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him For the help of His presence” (Psalms 42:5 NASB)*

*“You were tired out by the length of your road, Yet you did not say, 'It is hopeless.' You found renewed strength, Therefore you did not faint” (Isaiah 57:10 NASB)*

“This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil!” (Hebrews 6:19)

3. Hope banishes sorrow and causes joy:

*“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not sorrow as do the rest who have no hope” (1 Thessalonians 4:13 NASB)*

*“The hope of the righteous is gladness, But the expectation of the wicked perishes” (Proverbs 10:28 NASB)*

*“By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:2 KJV)*

4. Hope causes us to wait patiently:

*“For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it” (Romans 8:24-25 KJV)*

*“It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord” (Lamentations 3:26 KJV)*

C. True hope, like faith, affects the way we live:

1. We must purify ourselves of all defilements of the flesh and spirit:

*“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. **And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure**” (1 John 3:2-3 KJV)*

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14 KJV)*

*“Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1 NASB)*

2. Our hope will only be realized through diligent, holy living:

*“For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints. And we desire that **each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end**” (Hebrews 6:10-11 NASB)*

- a. “The full assurance of that hope exists where there is the highest desire of heaven, and such corresponding evidence of personal piety as to leave no doubt that it will be ours” (Barnes).
- b. Lessons. This outline is from Barnes’ commentary (emphasis mine):
  - (1) That full assurance of hope is to be **obtained only by holy living**.
  - (2) It is **only when that is persevered in that it can be obtained**.
  - (3) It is not by visions and raptures; by dreams and revelations that it can now be acquired, for God imparts no such direct revelation now.
  - (4) It is usually **only as the result of a life of consistent piety that such an assurance is to be obtained**. No man can have it who does not persevere in holy living, and they who do obtain it usually secure it only near the end of a life of eminent devotedness to God.

### Conclusion

1. Hope is, “*A confident expectation that is unobscured by doubt.*”
2. The things for which we hope are: a resurrection from the dead, to be made like Christ at His appearing, and for eternal life.
3. Every Christian is able to give a reason for this hope: it is founded on God’s faithfulness and the promises contained in His inspired word.
4. Every Christian that has this hope must purify himself of all defilements of the flesh and mind and diligently seek to live a life of holiness; without which no one shall see the Lord.
5. Do you have this hope? If you are not a Christian then, despite what you may believe or feel, you do not:

*“But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” (Titus 3:4-7 NASB)*

You can be saved *today* by rendering obedience to the gospel.



## THE IMPORTANCE OF PRIVATE BIBLE STUDY

### Introduction

1. God has blessed the church with teachers to give us our spiritual food. But it is vitally important that we learn to feed ourselves on a daily basis.
2. This lesson is designed to encourage daily Bible Study.

### I. WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

- A. *"Thy Word is truth"* (John 17:17).
- B. God's word is our spiritual food (Deuteronomy 8:3; Hebrews 5:13-14). It is essential that we grow to maturity.
- C. As the body needs daily food, so does the soul.

### II. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO STUDY?

- A. Study is not opening the Bible at random and reading.
- B. Some examples of studying are: a word study, a topical; study, or even a study of a particular Bible character.

### III. TRUSTING THE WORD TO SHOW US THE WAY OF LIFE

- A. The scriptures testify of Jesus (John 5:39).
- B. Scriptures able to make wise unto salvation (2 Timothy 3:15).

### IV. TRUSTING IN MEN

- A. To believe without searching the scriptures (John 5:39; Acts 17:11) endangers the soul.

### Conclusion

1. It is not good enough to come to services once a week and think that we will grow. We ought to study God's word on a regular basis privately.
2. Studying God's word benefits our own soul and those we are teaching (Hebrews 5:11-12).



## THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH

### Introduction

1. People practice all kinds of things in religion, things which cannot be found in the Bible. Yet they claim that they do these things by faith. Therefore, faith is reduced to a feeling.
2. Let us see what the Bible says about faith.

### I. ACTS OF FAITH

- A. Abram sojourned in the land of promise by faith (Hebrews 11:8-9).
- B. Noah prepared an ark to the salvation of his house by faith (Hebrews 11:7).
- C. Abel offered an acceptable sacrifice to God by faith (Hebrews 11:4).

### II. FAITH COMES BY HEARING

- A. Abram told to sojourn in land (Genesis 12:1-4).
- B. Noah was told to build the ark (Genesis 6:11-14).
- C. I conclude that Abel was told to offer what he did (Romans 10:17).

### III. WALK BY FAITH

- A. Must have authority for all things practiced (Colossians 3:17).
- B. Whatever is not of faith is sin (Romans 14:23).
- C. Faith comes by hearing (Romans 10:17).

### Conclusion

1. We have seen in this lesson that many of the Old Testament characters acted by faith. However, this faith was not some mysterious unknown quality. Rather, we see that they acted only after hearing God's word and then believing it; in turn it will be seen by the fruit of works.
2. So, the next time we are asked what faith is, our reply should be "Faith is, showing by works that we have believed what God has spoken."



## THE LAW AND THE SABBATH

*Are There Any Aspects Of The Law Still In Force?*

### Introduction

1. There is a lot of confusion regarding the Law of Moses. Some believe that the Law of Moses is still binding. Consider the following doctrinal statements:

“The Ten Commandments, as revealed by God, codified by Moses, and ratified and magnified by Christ, are the perfect expression of God’s love. They are the foundation of all biblical teaching, showing man how to express love toward God and fellowman, and are consequently the focal point of Christian life (Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5; Matthew 5:17–19; Romans 13:10; 1 Corinthians 7:19; Revelation 12:17; 22:14)” (Church of God International. <http://www.cgi.org/belief.cfm>).

“Biblical dietary laws, including the prohibitions of Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, are among the many health laws God gave to Israel. Jesus, the apostles, and the early New Testament church observed them, and they remain in effect today. Scripture indicates that laws pertaining to “clean” and “unclean” animals were recognized and observed from earliest times (Genesis 7:2–3; 8:20; Leviticus 3:17; 11; Deuteronomy 14:3–21; Matthew 5:17–19; Acts 10:9–15, 28)” (Ibid).

“Tithing is an act of worship; it is a private matter between the individual and God. The church does not ‘enforce’ or ‘police’ tithing, but simply teaches the responsibility to tithe. Each individual has the responsibility to ‘honor the Lord with his substance and with the firstfruits of all his increase.’ Tithing is a method by which the message of Jesus Christ is proclaimed to the world (Malachi 3:8–10; Matthew 6:21; 23:23; 2 Corinthians 9:7)” (Ibid).

“We believe in the commanded observance of the seven annual Holy Days that were given to ancient Israel by God; were kept by Jesus Christ, the apostles and the New Testament Church; and will be observed by all mankind during Christ’s millennial reign. These Holy Days reveal God’s plan of salvation (Colossians 2:16-17; 1 Peter 1:19-20; 1 Corinthians 5:8; 15:22-26; 16:8; James 1:18; Exodus 23:14-17; Leviticus 23; Luke 2:41-42; 22:14-15; John 7:2, 8, 10, 14; Acts 2:1; 18:21; 20:16; Zechariah 14:16-21)” (United Church of God. <http://www.ucg.org/booklets/FB/festivalsofgod.htm>).

“The seventh-day Sabbath is to be taught and kept holy in accordance with the biblical instruction. **Instituted at creation, reaffirmed to Israel** as a part of the covenant at Sinai, and **taught by Jesus Christ**, who is the Messenger of the New Covenant, the observance of the Sabbath is basic to a Christian’s relationship with God (Genesis 2:2–3; Exodus 16; 20:8–11; 31:12–17; Mark 2:27–28; Luke 4:16)” (Ibid).

2. In this lesson, we shall show that Christian are no longer under the Law of Moses. But I particularly want to answer the three points regarding the Sabbath in the last statement:

- a. Was the Sabbath instituted and commanded at creation?
- b. Was the Sabbath *reaffirmed* to Israel?
- c. Did Jesus teach that we should keep the Sabbath?

### I. A NATIONAL LAW

To whom was the Law given? Was it given to the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Was the Law it given to any other nations?

#### A. The giving of the Law at Mount Sinai.

1. The giving of the Law was first given at Mount Sinai (Exodus 20:1-17).
2. The Law was given to those whom the Lord had brought out of Egypt. God stated that He brought them out of Egypt and the Ten Commandments follow.

*“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” (Exodus 20:2 NASB)*

B. The second giving of the Law before Israel entered Canaan.

1. After wandering through the wilderness for forty years, Israel was now ready to enter Canaan. Moses had been forbidden to enter the land but he summoned Israel and gave them a farewell address. In this address he reminds them of the Law given to them at Mount Sinai (Deuteronomy 5:1-22).
2. Moses says this Law or covenant was given to them, Israel, only:

*“Then Moses summoned all Israel and said to them: Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the ordinances which I am speaking today in your hearing, that you may learn them and observe them carefully. The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. The LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, with all those of us alive here today” (Deuteronomy 5:1-3 NASB)*

C. The Law was not meant to be permanent but was only to remain until Christ came:

1. Paul taught this:

*“Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made” (Galatians 3:19 NASB)*

2. Jeremiah’s prophecy highlights the temporary nature of the Law (Jeremiah 31:31ff).

D. But didn’t Jesus teach us to keep the Sabbath?

1. Yes, Jesus directed a man to keep the commandments (Mark 10:17-19). Jesus also said that He had not come to abolish the Law and that men should be sure to abide in it (Matthew 5:17-18).
2. A few things to note about this:
  - a. The Law of Moses was still in effect and so, of course, Jesus would direct men to keep the Law.
  - b. Jesus Himself highlighted the temporary nature of the Law when He said, “...till all be fulfilled”.
  - c. The Law was fulfilled and the New Covenant came into effect at Jesus death (John 19:30; Hebrews 9:16ff).

**The Law was given only to Israel to govern them in the land they were about to possess.**

**II. DISTINCTIONS OF LAW**

Is there a distinction between the Law and the Ten Commandments and between the Ten Commandments and the Covenant?

A. Moses made no distinctions:

*“Then the LORD said to Moses, Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel. So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments” (Exodus 34:27-28 NASB)*

*“So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, that is, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone. The LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that you might perform them in the land where you are going over to possess it” (Deuteronomy 4:13-14 NASB)*

B. What did the New Testament writers understand by the term “Law”?

1. Paul shows the folly of seeking a return to the Law. Look at what he says:

*“Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman” (Galatians 4:21-22 NASB)*

- a. Note carefully what he asks them, “Tell me, you who want to be under the Law, do you not listen to the Law?” He then quotes from Genesis 16:15 “So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael.”

b. Paul quotes from the book of **Genesis** and refers to it as “**The Law**.”

2. Jesus, in answering the charge that He had blasphemed, quotes from the book of Psalms:

*“The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me? The Jews answered Him, For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God. Jesus answered them, Has it not been written in your Law, ‘I SAID, YOU ARE GODS?’” (John 10:31-34 NASB)*

- a. The Jews said Jesus was blaspheming because He claimed to be God. Jesus pointed out that even the judges are called “gods.” This was a quote from Psalms 82:6, “I said, You are gods, And all of you are sons of the Most High.”

b. Jesus quotes from the book of **Psalms** and refers to it as “**Your Law**” (See John 15:25).

3. Paul quoted from **Isaiah 28:11** and refers to this as written in “**The Law**.”

*“In the Law it is written, BY MEN OF STRANGE TONGUES AND BY THE LIPS OF STRANGERS I WILL SPEAK TO THIS PEOPLE, AND EVEN SO THEY WILL NOT LISTEN TO ME, says the Lord” (1 Corinthians 14:21 NASB)*

4. Paul quoted the tenth commandment from **Exodus 20:17** and spoke of it as “**The Law**.”

*“What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, YOU SHALL NOT COVET” (Romans 7:7 NASB)*

The New Testament writers included in the term *law*, *Genesis*, the *Ten Commandments*, the *Psalms*, the *Prophets* and the remainder of the law which was the entire Old Testament. Therefore, the Old Testament was given to the Jews to regulate their religious, civil and social life, and their conduct in the land of their possession until the Christ should come (Homer Hailey, *From Creation Until The Day Of Eternity*).

### III. CONCERNING THE SABBATH

Should Christians today be observing the Sabbath?

A. Some argue that the Sabbath Day of rest was actually given as a memorial of creation in Genesis 2:2-3. But note the following points:

1. The verses in Genesis contain *no command* for man to keep the Sabbath Day. It simply states that God rested and hallowed the day.
2. Man was commanded to keep the Sabbath but not until the Israelites came to Mount Sinai. The first mention of it is in Exodus 16 in connection with the Manna that God gave them. Nehemiah confirms this:

*“Then You came down on Mount Sinai, And spoke with them from heaven; You gave them just ordinances and true laws, Good statutes and commandments. So You made known to them Your holy sabbath. And laid down for them commandments, statutes and law, Through Your servant Moses. You provided bread from heaven for them for their hunger, You brought forth water from a rock for them for their thirst, And You told them to enter in order to possess The land which You swore to give them” (Nehemiah 9:13-15 NASB)*

3. The Sabbath was a sign between God and Israel, not between God and their fathers or the Gentiles.

*“But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you’” (Exodus 31:13 NASB)*

*“It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased from labor, and was refreshed” (Exodus 31:17 NASB)*

4. The Sabbath was not a memorial of the creation but a memorial of Israel’s deliverance from Egyptian bondage:

*“You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to observe the sabbath day” (Deuteronomy 5:15 NASB)*

The Sabbath was a sign between Jehovah and Israel (Exodus 31:13, 17). It was a memorial of Israel’s deliverance from Bondage (Deuteronomy 5:15)
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## Conclusion

1. Recap of main points:

- a. Jesus and other New Testament writers made no distinctions concerning the Law and all the Old Testament is referred to as *“The Law”*. The Law was all abolished when it was fulfilled and the testator died.
- b. The command to rest on the Sabbath was first given to Israel at Mount Sinai, and it was not a memorial of the creation but a memorial of Israel’s deliverance from bondage.

2. Application:

- a. While it is true that we are not under the Law of Moses, **we are under Law**:

*“To those who are without law, as without law, **though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ**, so that I might win those who are without law” (1 Corinthians 9:21 NASB)*

*“...for you are not under law but under grace” (Romans 6:14 NASB)*

- b. If we love the Lord then we will **keep His commandments**:

*“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3 NASB)*

*“The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us” (1 John 3:24 NASB)*

- c. As in the days of the apostles, there are those who will try and convince us to return wholly or partly to the Law of Moses...we must beware of such people and not let them deceive us:

*“See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him. Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ” (Colossians 2:8-17 NASB)*



# THE LOVE OF CHRIST

*An Old But New Commandment*

## Introduction

*“Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining” (1 John 2:7-8 NASB)*

1. The Scriptures speak of both an old commandment and a new commandment, which is to “love one another”.
2. In this lesson, we shall explore two things:
  - a. How the commandment to ‘love one another’ can be both old and new.
  - b. The new love that we must exercise toward one another.

## I. AN OLD BUT NEW COMMANDMENT

### A. An old commandment:

1. The Law said, “...*you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord*” (Leviticus 19:18 NASB). But the Scribes and Pharisees had added their interpretation and taught it as a precept of God:

*“You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy'” (Matthew 5:43 NASB)*

2. Jesus’ response:

*“But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44 NASB)*

### B. A new commandment:

*“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, **even as I have loved you**, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35 NASB)*

1. As we have seen, the Law taught people that should love their neighbours (Leviticus 19:18). Here, Jesus enjoins on His disciples a *new* commandment (John 13:34).
2. What is *new* about this commandment?
  - a. A new measure of love. Reynolds comments:

*“So a new type of love is given, as the Greek expositors generally have urged. There is a deeper intensity in this love than can be found in Moses' ‘Love thy neighbor as thyself.’ In that commandment which embraces the whole law, self-love is assumed and made the standard for the love of neighbor. The new commandment, on the other hand, is based on a new principle, measured by a higher standard than love of self. This is based on Christ's love, which was self-abandoning and self-sacrificing love” (H. R. Reynolds, The Pulpit Commentary).*

- b. A new badge by which God’s people would be known. Barnes comments:

*“It is called new, not because there was no command before which required people to love their fellow-man, for one great precept of the law was that they should love their neighbor as themselves Leviticus19:18; but it was new because it had never before been made that by which any class or body of people had been known and distinguished. The Jew was known by his external rites, by his uniqueness of dress, etc.; the philosopher by some other mark of distinction; the military man by another, etc. In none of these cases had love for each other been the distinguishing and special badge by which they were known. But in the case of Christians they were not to be known by distinctions of wealth, or learning, or fame; they were not to aspire to earthly honors; they were not to adopt any special style of dress or badge, but they were to be distinguished by tender and constant attachment to each other” (Barnes).*

C. This, then, is the commandment of Jesus:

*“This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you” (John 15:12 NASB)*

1. What we must do – *“love one another.”*
2. The degree of love – *“just as I have loved you.”*

## II. THE LOVE OF JESUS

A. Jesus’ love is a comprehensive love:

*“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13 NASB)*

*“For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time” (1 Timothy 2:5-6 NASB)*

*“For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:6 NASB)*

1. He died for His friends.
2. He died for His enemies.
  - a. Jesus taught that we should pray for our enemies (Matthew 5:43-44). Jesus prayed for His enemies on the cross (Luke 23:34).
  - b. Steven imitated this love when he prayed for those who were stoning him (Acts 7:60).

B. Jesus’ love was an unconditional love:

*“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8 NASB)*

1. Christ died for us, *“While we were yet sinners”*.
2. Love always demonstrates itself.

C. Jesus’ love is the standard for love in the home:

*“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:25 NASB)*

D. Jesus’ loved even when it was very costly and didn’t feel good:

*“And He came out and proceeded as was His custom to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed Him. When He arrived at the place, He said to them, Pray that you may not enter into temptation. And He withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and began to pray, saying, Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done. Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground” (Luke 22:39-44 NASB)*

1. Jesus didn’t *“feel good”* about going to the cross.
2. Love is based on choice and commitment, not how good it makes us feel (Luke 9:51).

*“The time appointed for him to remain on the earth was about expiring, and he resolved to go to Jerusalem and die. And from this we learn that Jesus made a voluntary sacrifice; that he “chose” to give his life for the sins of people. Humanly speaking, had he remained in Galilee he would have been safe; but that it might appear that he did not shun danger, and that he was really a voluntary sacrifice that no man had power over his life except as he was permitted (John 19:11) - he chose to put himself in the way of danger, and even to go into scenes which he knew would end in his death” (Barnes).*

3. Your wedding vows were *“for better or worse”* not *“for better or I’m leaving.”*

E. Christ's love included rebuke and discipline:

*“And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And He was stating the matter plainly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But turning around and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter and said, Get behind Me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's” (Mark 8:31-33 NASB)*

1. Peter may have been hurt but do you think Jesus still loved him?
2. Rebuke and discipline is not enjoyable for either party but is necessary.

*“You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM” (Hebrews 12:4-5 NASB)*

**Conclusion**

1. Love is to be measured by (at least) these five aspects.
  - a. Do you love your friends *and* your enemies?
  - b. Is your love unconditional?
  - c. Is the love of Jesus the standard for love in your home?
  - d. Does your love endure the emotionally difficult times?
  - e. Do you love enough to compassionately confront others?
2. Love is not an option, it is essential.

*“For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous. Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him. For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us” (1 John 3:11-24 NASB)*



# THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS

*An exposition of 1 Timothy 3:14-16*

## Introduction

*“These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, **that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God**, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (1 Timothy 3:14-16)*

## I. CONCERNING THE CHURCH

- A. *“House of God”* is a reference to the Temple of God which was still standing in the Holy city. The glorious structure, the magnificent interior, the beautiful furniture overlaid with gold; the priests adorned with holy garments, and the inspiring worship. This picture conjures up feelings of awe, respect, and reverence for God.
- B. *“Which is the church”*. Though the house of God was glorious, yet a temple even more glorious had been erected, a temple spiritual in nature that can never be destroyed - The Church.
- C. *“Know how to conduct yourself in the house of God”*. When we come together as a church it is for the purpose of breaking bread, worship, edification, benevolence, etc. Such ought to be done *“decently and in order”* (1 Corinthians 14:40). Both these phrases show that there is inappropriate and appropriate behavior to be observed in the assembly:

1. Observing customs (1 Corinthians 11:4-16).
2. Modest apparel (1 Timothy 2:9).
3. Maintaining the spiritual nature of our worship (1 Peter 2:5).

- D. *“The pillar and ground of the truth”*. A pillar is that which supports the roof of a structure, support being the operative word. The word foundation is added for the sake of emphasis. We may read:

*‘I write so that you may know how to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the pillar, no more than this, the very foundation stone of the truth’.*

The church, then, is the bearer of the truth (see Philippians 2:15-16).

- E. *“The mystery of godliness”* is a synonym of *“mystery of the faith”* found in verse nine. The word mystery conveys the wrong idea to the English mind, we tend to think of a mystery as something hidden and incomprehensible. But in the New Testament it means ‘the hidden things that have now been revealed’. Consider Paul's words:

*“How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit” (Ephesians 3:3-5)*

The word *godliness* stands for the doctrines that have been revealed, which he will specify. The phrase may be read:

*“And without controversy great are the revealed doctrines of our faith”.*

## II. CONCERNING DOCTRINES THAT ARE CENTRAL TO OUR FAITH

- A. *“God was manifested in the flesh”* (See John 1:1, 14).

*“And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin” (1 John 3:5)*

*“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (1 Peter 2:24)*

B. *“Justified in the Spirit”*. The prophet Isaiah foretold that Jesus would be rejected (Isaiah 53:3).

1. He was rejected...

*“Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain” (Acts 2:23)*

2. But was declared to be the Son of God...

*“And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4).*

C. *“Seen by angels”*.

1. The word angel means *'a messenger, one sent'* and as well as referring to those spiritual beings that dwell in heaven it may also refer to men (Mark 1:2; Luke 77:24; 9:52).

2. The word *apostle* also means *'one sent forth'* and is used generically as well as specifically (Luke 6:13; Acts 14:14).

3. Therefore, it is quite possible that angels here refers to those who witnessed the resurrection, and whom the lord sent out to witness the fact (Acts 10:40-41; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8; 1 John 1:2).

D. *“Preached among the Gentiles”*. This was the fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham that...

*“In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 12:3)*

(See Galatians 2:2; Ephesians 3:7-8)

E. *“Believed on in the world”*. The preaching of the gospel was not in vain for many became obedient to the faith (Acts 9:42; 11:21; 13:48; 14:1; 17:12; 18:8).

F. *“Received up in glory”*. After being raised from the dead Jesus was received back into glory, a glory which He shared with the Father before the foundation of the world (John 17:5; Hebrews 1:3-4>2:9; 1 Peter 1:20-21; Cp. 1 Peter 5:4).

## **Conclusion**

1. The church of God is the bearer and proclaimer of the truth.

2. Jesus is the centre and focus of our preaching.

3. *“Jesus Christ and Him crucified”* is the central message of the church.

I pray that this exposition has been helpful and encouraging.

Word Studies: Pillar 4769; Foundation 1477; Justified 1344; Angel 32; Apostle 652.

## THE OBJECTIVE OF BEING A CHRISTIAN

### Introduction

1. What is the objective of a car salesman? The designation *car salesman* is a bit of a giveaway! His objective is to sell cars. But what would happen if that objective became cloudy or distorted? What if he supposed that his objective was to convince people that Vauxhall made the best cars? Once a person loses sight of their original objective, they will, more than likely, fail in two respects:
  - a. The primary objective is neglected or even ignored.
  - b. It is very unlikely, then, that they will achieve the original objective.
2. As Christians, we too have an objective and, like our car salesman, if we lose sight of it, we fail in the same two respects.
3. The objective of this lesson is to remind us of our objective.

### I. MISCONCEPTIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN'S OBJECTIVE

A. Different people may have their own idea of the primary objective of a Christian:

1. Doctrinal unity (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; Ephesians 4:3-6).
2. The conversion of the world (Mark 16:15-16).

[While the Scriptures do emphasize these objectives, neither is the primary objective].

B. The consequences of a misconceived objective:

1. The primary objective is neglected or, at worst, ignored.
2. It is unlikely that the primary objective will be realised.
3. If the primary objective of a Christian is neglected:
  - a. Any other objectives will be of no value or fail.
  - b. Working toward these objectives will actually do injury.

### II. THE CHRISTIAN'S PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

A. The primary objective of a Christian is stated by Paul.

1. The passage states our objective:

*“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also **did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren”*  
(Romans 8:28-29)

- a. In this passage Paul is speaking of God's great purpose for those who obey the gospel, a purpose conceived in eternity.
  - b. The great objective is that we might be *“conformed to the image of His Son”* (Romans 8:29).
2. This *transformation*, however, does not happen over night, it is a continuous process.

*“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord”* (2 Corinthians 3:18)

- a. When Moses spoke with the Lord, the glory of the Lord was reflected in his face (2 Corinthians 3:13).
- b. But all Christians may now look into the mirror, the gospel, and be changed into the same image, the image of Christ.

3. This passage is, perhaps, a commentary on the first passage. It exhorts us to “*be ye transformed,*” and reveals how this transformation takes place.

*“And be not conformed to this world: but **be ye transformed** by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:2)*

- a. The former part of the verse warns us not to conformed or moulded by the principles of people in society.
- b. The later part of the verse reveals that the transformation takes place through *the renewing of the mind*.
4. The following verses, combined, further reveal how this *renewing* takes place.

*“For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet **the inward man is renewed day by day**” (2 Corinthians 4:16)*

*“**And be renewed in the spirit of your mind**” (Ephesians 4:23)*

*“And have put on the new man, **which is renewed in knowledge** after the image of him that created him” (Colossians 3:10)*

- a. The first tells us that we are renewed *day by day*; it is an ongoing process.
- b. The second verse says we are to “*be renewed.*” The word *be* indicates that our renewal is conditional on us taking an active part.
- c. The third verse reveals that we are renewed *through knowledge*.
- B. No wonder, then, we are exhorted...

*“That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and **increasing in the knowledge of God**” (Colossians 1:10)*

*“**But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen**” (2 Peter 3:18)*

## Conclusion

1. The primary objective of a Christian, your primary objective, is to be conformed to the image of Christ.
2. It is essential, then, that we learn all that we can about Jesus; not merely for the sake of *knowing* but that we might imitate Him.

*“Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1)*

*“He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked” (1 John 2:6)*

3. If we lose sight of this primary objective then it is unlikely the objective will be known.
4. Further, to replace the primary objective, of being transformed to His image, with something else will, obviously, be of no value. Who can believe that one can have a perfect knowledge of the doctrine of Christ without any transformation?
5. Let us do as Paul exhorts:

*“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:2)*



## THE OCCULT

### Introduction

1. The occult is all around us and becoming increasingly popular.
2. Below are some things we shall consider...
  - a. Do witches and mediums really have any power?
  - b. Can astrologers predict the future?
  - c. What is God's view of such people?

### I. THE OCCULT IS NOT NEW!

- A. Pharaoh employed sorcerers (Exodus 7:11).
- B. Manasseh, king of Israel, dealt with mediums etc. (2 Kings 21:6).
- C. Saul used a medium (1 Samuel 28).

### II. DO THEY REALLY HAVE POWER?

- A. Pharaoh's sorcerers did turn sticks into snakes before all (Exodus 7:11).
- B. The witch of Endor did contact Samuel (1 Samuel 28:11-12).
- C. Simon the sorcerer bewitched the people (Acts 8:9-11).
- D. From the examples we can say that they had the 'power to deceive.'

### III. PREDICTING THE FUTURE

- A. Israel had false prophets (Deuteronomy 18:22).
- B. Paul had to deal with a woman who predicted the future (Acts 16:16).
- C. Astrologers today claim to predict the future.

### IV. GOD'S VIEW OF MEDIUMS ETC?

- A. God is against mediums and wizards (Leviticus 20:6).
- B. Even if they show wonders, they were to be put to death (Deuteronomy 13:1-5).
- C. No medium etc. to be found among Israel (Deuteronomy 18:10-13).

### V. WHAT SHALL WE DO?

- A. Burn all magic books (Acts 19:18-19).
- B. Do not be led to follow other god's even if they do show wonders (Deuteronomy 13:1-5).
- C. They are a test of our faith (Deuteronomy 13:1-11).

### Conclusion

1. We are surrounded by witches, wizards, mediums, and star gazers telling our fortunes and futures. They are a strong influence and hard to ignore.
2. However, we must never be tempted to follow after these dreamers.

*"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil." (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22)*



# THE ONE BAPTISM

*Ephesians 4:4-5*

## Introduction

1. Today, there is much ignorance concerning baptism. People are confused about the mode, meaning, and purpose of baptism. Some suppose baptism may be administered in variety modes; many think baptism is merely an outward sign; while others think the purpose of baptism is a dedication ceremony.
2. In this lesson I hope to show you what the Bible teaches on the subject of baptism, but without interjecting any opinions or preconceived notions. We will consider five aspects of baptism:
  - a. The origin of baptism.
  - b. The effects of baptism.
  - c. The conditional nature of baptism.
  - d. The symbolism in baptism.
  - e. The purpose of baptism.
3. Before we proceed, we need to take note of a statement made by Paul: *“There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism”* (Ephesians 4:4-5 NASB).

## I. WHICH BAPTISM?

### A. John’s baptism.

1. Water baptism was first introduced by John the Baptist (Mark 1:1-4). This was about A.D. 30.
2. John’s baptism was *“a baptism of repentance”* (Mark 1:4).
3. John’s baptism was *“unto the remission of sins”* (Mark 1:4) and was promissory in nature (see Leviticus 4; Hebrews 9:15-17, 24-28).
4. John’s baptism was limited to the Jews (Matthew 3:1-6).
5. John’s baptism was valid only until the New Covenant came into force (Acts 2:38; 19:4).

### B. The baptism of the Holy Spirit.

1. John pointed to Jesus who would baptise in the Spirit (Matthew 3:11).
2. Jesus Himself promised to baptise the apostles in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5).
3. The prophecy of Joel promised a baptism of the Spirit on all flesh [Jew and Gentile] (Joel 2:28).
4. Both Jesus’ and the prophets’ promises were fulfilled (see Acts 2:1-4; 10:44-48).

### C. Christian baptism.

1. This baptism is for all nations (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15-16).
2. It is a baptism for all time (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15-16).

## II. TWO DOWN ONE TO GO!

- A. The last recorded baptism of the Holy Spirit is in Acts 10:44-48. This occurred about A.D. 43.
- B. The validity of John’s baptism was only until the establishment of the kingdom (John 3:5).
- C. Definitely by A.D. 62 only one baptism remained (Ephesians 4:5).

### III. FIVE ASPECTS OF BAPTISM

- A. Divine in origin. Jesus Himself instituted it (Mark 16:15-16).
- B. Affects a union and fellowship with the Godhead (Matthew 28:19; cf. 1 Corinthians 10:2).
  - 1. “Baptising into the name of the Holy Trinity implies a spiritual and mystical union with Him” (VWS).
  - 2. “[The term] in the name has reference to the sphere within which alone true baptism is accomplished” (VWS).
  - 3. “When one is baptised into the name of the Trinity, he professes to acknowledge and appropriate God in all that He is and all that He does for man. He recognises and depends upon God the Father as his creator and preserver; receives Jesus Christ as his only mediator and redeemer, and His pattern of life, and confesses the Holy Spirit as His sanctifier and comforter” (VWS).
- C. Conditional in nature i.e. must believe etc. (Mark 16:16; Acts 8:37).
- D. Symbolic in practice (Romans 6:3-5; cf. Colossians 2:12). And is therefore an immersion.
- E. Specific in purpose (Acts 2:38; 22:16).

#### **Conclusion**

The Bible speaks of three different baptisms but by A.D. 62 there remained only one. This baptism has and always will be:

- 1. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- 2. For those who have a personal faith in Jesus Christ.
- 3. By immersion only.
- 4. And is for the remission of sins.