

**MY SERMON OUTLINES**

(VOLUME ONE)

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# A FORMULA FOR HONEST LIVING

1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

## Introduction

1. In this lesson we will look at three commands that result in honest living: (i) Study to be quiet, (ii) Do your own business, and, (iii) Work with your own hands. The objective of this lesson is that each of us understands the Bible teaching on these commands.

2. The context:

a. The text. The first is from the KJV and the second is from the NASB, which gives a better sense.

*“But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more; And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing” (1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 KJV)*

*“Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more, and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need” (1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 NASB)*

b. Paul is encouraging the church at Thessalonica to love one another; he knows that they have love, but wants them to abound in it more and more.

c. To this end he encourages behavior that is consistent with a life of love and that results in honest living. This behavior consists of three commands: (i) Study to be quiet, (ii) Do your own business, and (iii) Work with your own hands.

## I. STUDY TO BE QUIET

A. What does it mean to *study to be quiet*?

1. **Study** – The Greek word *philotimeomai* means “*loving or fond of honor, ambitious*” (CWD). In this context, it means *to have an ambition for or be ambitious for*. **Quiet** – The Greek word *hesuchazo* means “*refrain from labor, cease, hold peace, be quiet, rest*” (Strong’s). Here, it is used figuratively and the sense is: to live a quiet life which does not disturb others or attract the wrong kind of attention.

2. The meaning is, we must desire or be ambitious to live the kind of life that isn't a disturbance and doesn't bring undue attention to ourselves.

B. Living a quiet life is desirable because...

1. It is better than strife.

*“Better is a dry morsel and quietness with it Than a house full of feasting with strife” (Proverbs 17:1 NASB)*

2. It's better than burning the candle at both ends.

*“One hand full of rest is better than two fists full of labor and striving after wind” (Ecclesiastes 4:6 NASB)*

3. It shows we are children of God.

*“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9 NASB)*

C. How do we obtain a quiet and peaceful life?

1. We can pray.

*“For kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity” (1 Timothy 2:2 NASB)*

2. We can be a righteous people.

*“And the work of righteousness will be peace, And the service of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever” (Isaiah 32:17 NASB)*

3. We must strive for peace with all.

*“So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another” (Romans 14:19 NASB)*

## II. DO YOUR OWN BUSINESS

A. What does it mean to *do your own business*?

1. In today’s language it means to *mind your own business*. Many people love to mind other people’s business, but a Christian must tend to his own affairs.

2. Paul re-emphasizes this point in the second epistle.

*“For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread” (2 Thessalonians 3:11-12 NASB)*

B. What does the Bible say about minding our own business?

1. A man who attends to the business of working diligently will rise to a higher position. Joseph and Daniel are examples of this general truth.

*“Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will stand before kings; He will not stand before obscure men” (Proverbs 22:29 NASB)*

2. We are to do our business with a good attitude.

*“Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men” (Colossians 3:23 NASB)*

3. If we do not mind our own business, then our behavior will become shameful.

*“At the same time they also learn to be idle, as they go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper to mention” (1 Timothy 5:13 NASB)*

C. Why is it so important to mind our own business?

1. Once we turn from minding our own business, we become undisciplined, and we’ll naturally want to socialize with like-minded people, and so we continue in a downward spiral (1 Corinthians 15:33).

*“My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent. If they say, Come with us, Let us lie in wait for blood, Let us ambush the innocent without cause; Let us swallow them alive like Sheol, Even whole, as those who go down to the pit; We will find all kinds of precious wealth, We will fill our houses with spoil; Throw in your lot with us, We shall all have one purse, My son, do not walk in the way with them. Keep your feet from their path, For their feet run to evil And they hasten to shed blood. Indeed, it is useless to spread the baited net In the sight of any bird; But they lie in wait for their own blood; They ambush their own lives. So are the ways of everyone who gains by violence; It takes away the life of its possessors” (Proverbs 1:10-19 NASB)*

2. The downward spiral can begin by simply neglecting to mind our own business.



### III. WORK WITH YOUR OWN HANDS

#### A. What does it mean to *work with your own hands*?

1. It simply means to fulfil one's responsibility by working in some employment for the support of one's self and family.
2. This is a natural consequence of minding our own business and tending to the affairs of our own life.

#### B. Why do we work?

##### 1. To keep us out of trouble.

a. Man was given work from the beginning (Genesis 2:15). When we are busy working with our own hands, we don't have much time to get into trouble.

b. It is when we are idle that we get ourselves into trouble (2 Thessalonians 3:6-11).

##### 2. To fulfil our responsibility of providing for our family.

*"But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8 NASB)*

##### 3. To provide for other's needs.

*"Therefore it says, when he ascended on high, he led captive a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men" (Ephesians 4:8 NASB)*

##### 4. Paul speaks to these purposes...

*"You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me. In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" (Acts 20:34-35 NASB)*

### Conclusion

#### 1. To lead an honest life we...

- a. Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life.
- b. Tend to your own business.
- c. Keep yourself in employment.

#### 2. Paul says that we do these things so that we can walk honestly toward those who are not Christians, and lack for nothing.



## A GROWING COMMITMENT

### Introduction

1. Having been convinced of the truth of the gospel, you made a decision to commit yourself to Jesus and the truth (Ephesians 1:13; Colossians 1:5-6; 1 Peter 1:22).
2. This commitment is essential if we hope to receive the crown of life (Revelation 2:10).
3. However, commitment is something that must be *maintained* and *nurtured*. In this lesson we will suggest three ways in which we can begin to develop a deeper commitment.

### I. A COMMITMENT TO JESUS AND THE INTERESTS OF THE KINGDOM

#### A. Jesus called men to follow Him. Why?

1. He is the source of eternal life (John 3:16; 6:54, 68; 10:28; 17:2-3) that men seek (John 5:39).
2. He is the way, the truth, and the life (John 1:17; 14:6).
3. All spiritual blessings are in Christ (Ephesians 1:3): redemption (Romans 3:23), freedom from condemnation (Romans 8:1), freedom from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2), sanctification (1 Corinthians 1:2), given spiritual life (1 Corinthians 15:22), a new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17), equality (Galatians 3:28).

#### B. Jesus must come first in our lives (Mark 12:30; Matthew 6:24).

1. Jesus must come before worldly affairs (Matthew 8:18-22; Luke 9:57-62).
2. Jesus must be our first love (Luke 14:26).
3. Jesus must be our only master (Matthew 6:24-25).

#### C. The concerns of the kingdom must come first (Matthew 6:33).

1. Jesus wants you to be born again (John 3:5). Save yourself first.
2. Jesus wants you to be a fisher of men (Mark 1:17).
3. Jesus wants you to put the concerns of the kingdom above worldly concerns (Luke 9:59-62).

### II. WHAT STEPS CAN I TAKE TO DEEPEN MY COMMITMENT?

#### A. Constantly remind yourself of the motive for your commitment.

*“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (1 John 4:10. > Romans 5:8. > John 3:16. > Ephesians 2:8).*

#### B. Read, study, and pray on a regular basis.

1. Stick to a daily reading plan (Ephesians 3:3-4; 2 Timothy 3:15-16).
2. Devote time each day to study and research of a particular Bible subject (John 5:39; Acts 17:11). Reading and studying will increase our faith (Luke 17:5; Romans 10:17).
3. For those with families, have a gathering/devotional in the evenings.

#### C. “Members” in particular (1 Corinthians 12:27).

*“Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues” (1 Corinthians 12:27-28).*

*“For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called His own servants, and delivered unto them His goods. And unto one He gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one, to every man according to his several ability; and straightaway took His journey” (Matthew 25:14-15).*

1. Discover your God-given talents and learn how best to use them for the edification and growth of the body.
2. Find out what efforts are being made, on a corporate level, to preach the gospel, and volunteer to get involved.

### **Conclusion**

1. Our initial commitment to Christ is something that we must continue to maintain and develop. It will not just simply 'happen'.
2. In this lesson I have suggested three steps that we can all take to help us have a growing commitment to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.
  - a. Keep the motive for your commitment in mind.
  - b. Read, study, and pray on a regular basis.
  - c. Use your talents and get involved in the work.

# A HOME BUILT ON A ROCK

## *Elements of the Foundation*

### Introduction

1. The home was the first institution established by God. The home is...
  - a. Where the closest and intimate human relationships are developed and nurtured.
  - b. Where character and maturity are developed and nurtured.
  - c. Where respect and responsibility are learnt and nurtured.
2. This lesson will set forth the elements of a foundation necessary for establishing a home.

### I. RECOGNIZING AND FULFILLING OUR DIVINELY ORDAINED ROLES

#### A. The family is the first of God's great institutions:

1. It was established from the very beginning:

*"For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24 NASB)*

2. It is an honorable state:

*"Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4 NASB)*

*"Let this state be highly esteemed as one of God's own instituting, and as highly calculated to produce the best interests of mankind" (Clarke).*

#### B. The hierarchy within the home:

1. In general, the man rules over the woman.

*"To the woman He said, I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you." (Genesis 3:16 NASB)*

*"For indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake" (1 Corinthians 11:9 NASB)*

*"In the fallen state, she is to be subject to the will of her husband. 'Desire' does not refer to sexual desire in particular. It means, in general, 'turn,' determination of the will. 'The determination of thy will shall be yielded to thy husband, and, accordingly, he shall rule over thee.' The second clause, according to the parallel structure of the sentence, is a climax or emphatic reiteration of the first, and therefore serves to determine its meaning" (Keil & Delitzsch).*

2. Roles within the home:

- a. The husband is to fulfil his role as head of the family.

*"For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Saviour of the body" (Ephesians 5:23 NASB)*

*"He must be **one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity**" (1 Timothy 3:4 NASB)*

- b. The wife is to fulfil her role as a keeper of the home.

- 1) Women are preserved through the *"bearing of children"*.

*“But women will be **preserved through the bearing of children** if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.” (1 Timothy 2:15 NASB)*

“The basic meaning here is, that women will be preserved if they continue to walk in faith and in fulfilment of the role that God has designed for all women alike. The term *bearing of children* is put for all the functions and duties that are associated with her role. The term *housewife* and *homemaker* are modern synonyms” (*Quotes & Things, Commentary, D. Collins*).

2) The older women are to teach the younger women to be “*workers at home*”.

*“Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, **workers at home**, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.” (Titus 2:3-5 NASB)*

The word *workers* is from the Greek word *oikouros* and denotes “a good housekeeper” (See Strong’s & Vine’s).

c. Children are to honor and submit to the rule of their parents.

*“Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you...” (Deuteronomy 5:16 NASB)*

*“Listen to your father who begot you, And do not despise your mother when she is old.” (Proverbs 23:22 NASB)*

*“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” (Ephesians 6:1 NASB)*

## II. LAW AND ORDER

“Without law there is anarchy, and without discipline there may as well be no law” (*Quotes & Things, Miscellaneous Comments, D. Collins*).

A. Society cannot exist and thrive that does not have laws, and it quickly descends into anarchy where those laws are not enforced (In society, the correlation between a rise in crime and milder punishments meted out to lawbreakers is easily perceived). The same is true of every institution and organization within society.

1. A company that fails to enforce rules and regulations would soon come to ruin.
2. A church without rules of conduct and order will soon descend into confusion and disorder (Cp. 1 Corinthians 14).
3. Likewise, a home without rules and discipline will fall (Mark 3:25).

a. The sons of Eli were priests but they greatly abused their position:

*“Now the sons of Eli were worthless men; they did not know the LORD and the custom of the priests with the people. When any man was offering a sacrifice, the priest’s servant would come while the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand. Then he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. Thus they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. Also, before they burned the fat, the priest’s servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, Give the priest meat for roasting, as he will not take boiled meat from you, only raw. If the man said to him, They must surely burn the fat first, and then take as much as you desire, then he would say, No, but you shall give it to me now; and if not, I will take it by force. Thus the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD, for the men despised the offering of the LORD” (1 Samuel 2:12-17 NASB)*

b. Eli rebuked his sons:

*“Now Eli was very old; and he heard all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who served at the doorway of the tent of meeting. He said to them, Why do you do such things, the evil things that I hear from all these people? No, my sons; for the report is not good which I hear the LORD'S people circulating. If one man sins against another, God will mediate for him; but if a man sins against the LORD, who can intercede for him? **But they would not listen to the voice of their father**, for the LORD desired to put them to death.” (1 Samuel 2:22-25 NASB)*

c. But rebuke (telling off) alone is not sufficient, and Eli himself was rebuked and punished by God for not disciplining his children (See 1 Samuel 2:27ff).

d. So what should Eli have done about his rebellious sons?

*“If any man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father or his mother, and when they chastise him, he will not even listen to them, then his father and mother shall seize him, and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gateway of his hometown. They shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey us, he is a glutton and a drunkard.' Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death; so you shall remove the evil from your midst, and all Israel will hear of it and fear.” (Deuteronomy 21:18-21 NASB)*

B. It is the responsibility of the husband to rule or manage his own family.

*“He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity” (1 Timothy 3:4 NASB)*

*“Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households.” (1 Timothy 3:12 NASB)*

*“While it is true that these passages speak primarily to those who aspire to the office of an elder or deacon, the requirement that a man rule his household is applicable to all men” (DEC).*

1. It is essential that rules be made.

2. It is essential that rebuke *and* discipline be administered when the rules are transgressed. This principle can be seen in the following passage...

*“Those whom I love, I **reprove and discipline**; therefore be zealous and repent.” (Revelation 3:19 NASB)*

*“A man who fails to rule his house is a coward; grief and regret shall be his portion” (TBW<sup>1</sup>)*

### III. LOVE, THE UNDERPINNING

*“Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.” (Colossians 3:14 NASB)*

*“Let **all** that you do be done in love.” (1 Corinthians 16:14 NASB)*

*“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness” (Galatians 5:22 NASB)*

A. Several scriptures demonstrate the necessity of love as the underpinning of a happy family.

1. Admonitions to husbands:

*“Husbands, **love your wives**, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:25 NASB)*

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<sup>1</sup> The Book Of Wisdom

*“Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to **love his own wife even as himself**, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.” (Ephesians 5:33 NASB)*

*“Husbands, **love your wives and do not be embittered against them**.” (Colossians 3:19 NASB)*

*“You husbands in the same way, **live with your wives in an understanding way**, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; **and show her honor** as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.” (1 Peter 3:7 NASB)*

*“He who withholds his rod hates his son, But **he who loves him disciplines him diligently**.” (Proverbs 13:24 NASB)*

*“For whom the LORD **loves** He reproveth, Even as a father corrects the son in whom he **delights**.” (Proverbs 3:12 NASB)*

2. Admonition to wives:

*“So that they may encourage the young **women to love their husbands, to love their children**”<sup>2</sup> (Titus 2:4 NASB)*

*“But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the **wives ought to be to their husbands in everything**” (Ephesians 5:24 NASB)*

3. Admonition to children:

*“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. **HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER** (which is the first commandment with a promise), **SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH**.” (Ephesians 6:1-3 NASB)*

*“Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord.” (Colossians 3:20 NASB)*

## Conclusion

1. A home that is built on a solid foundation is a home filled with love and happiness. A home built on sand will divide and fall.
2. A happy home is built on a foundation that requires...
  - a. Each member recognising and submitting to the role that God has assigned them.
  - b. The husband ruling over the house and ensuring discipline is meted out when necessary.
  - c. That love is the motive and underpinning of all that is done.

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<sup>2</sup> This admonition to “love their children” would apply to both parents.



## A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

### Introduction

1. All around us there are people with negative attitudes who exhibit bad behavior. A constant exposure to such can have a strong influence on us.
2. The following exhortations will help us maintain a positive attitude.

### I. REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE!

- A. We are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27).
- B. God created all things for us to enjoy (Genesis 2:9).
- C. God placed man in a position of responsibility (Genesis 2:15).

### II. PURPOSE AND DUTY

- A. To have fellowship with God (1 John 1:1-3).
- B. To have fellowship with one another (Cp. Matthew 19:29; 12:48-50).
- C. Our duty is to fear God and keep His commandments (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

### III. DESTINATION

- A. You made a decision to be a Christian.
- B. How we live shows that decision (Galatians 5:19-26).
- C. Our home will be in heaven (John 14:1-3; Philippians 3:20).

### IV. MAKE GOALS

- A. To love the brethren fervently (1 Peter 1:22).
- B. Build deeper relationships (Hebrews 10:25).
- C. Ensure that our worship is in spirit and truth (John 4:24).

### Conclusion

1. When we need lifting up, let us remember that we are children of God that will shortly be with Him forever.
2. While here on earth, we may have fellowship with God and with each other, while all striving to do the will of God.



## A RIGHT WORLD VIEW

*“You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough. I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view; but the one who is disturbing you will bear his judgment, whoever he is. But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished. I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves” (Galatians 5:7-12 NASB)*

### Introduction

1. Paul uses strong language in these verses, and some translations have tried to soften Paul’s words, but in doing so, they have taken away the force of his anger toward those who would lead God’s people astray.
2. Paul had labored more than the other apostles (1 Corinthians 15:10) in preaching the gospel and establishing churches throughout the entire world, but false teachers would come in behind him, enter the churches, and introduce destructive heresies. They were teaching Christians that it was *necessary* to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses (Galatians 5:2-3).
3. Paul was so frustrated at those false teachers and their efforts to add to the message of the faith that he shouted, “*I wish those who are disturbing you might also get themselves castrated!*” (Galatians 5:12).
4. Today, it isn’t circumcision and obedience to Law that is being urged upon believers, but the principles are still the same. It is still the case that false teachers seek to urge something more upon believers other than the gospel. But the point is the same: when you add to God’s message and requirements you are violating God’s will and would be better off castrating yourself than changing God’s word.

### I. CONTINUE TO RUN WELL

- A. The Christians in Galatia had begun well - Jesus was the essence of God’s grace and gospel to them. They believed that Christ “*gave Himself for our sins to rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of God*” (Galatians 1:4).
  1. They became sons of God through faith in Christ (Galatians 3:26).
  2. They were baptized into Christ and had put on Christ (Galatians 3:27).
  3. They were all one in Christ - race, status and sex being irrelevant (Galatians 3:28).
  4. There were heirs together according to the promise of God (Galatians 3:26-29).
- B. But something hindered them; they were not continuing to obey the truth of God; they came into Christ through their obedience but it hadn’t continued as their way of life (Cf. James 1:23-25).
- C. Obedience is not just a one time act to bring us into a saved relationship; it is a continued way of life (Revelation 22:14; Hebrews 5:8-9).
- D. The ones who were hindering them claimed to speak from God, but Paul declared their message wasn’t from God at all.
  1. Claiming to be from God doesn’t make it so. John says that we must test the spirits to see if they are from God because many false teachers have gone out into the world (1 John 4:1-2).
  2. It is not enough to call Jesus Lord; we must obey Him as Lord (Matthew 7:21-23).
  3. Just a little of the wrong influence or wrong teaching can lead us completely away from God. A little leaven, leavens the whole lump of dough (Galatians 5:9).

## II. CHECK YOUR POINT OF VIEW

- A. Paul had confidence in them that they would not accept any other point of view (Galatians 5:10). They were to ground their faith in the teachings they had received from the beginning. Any point of view which went counter to the way of grace and faith wasn't from God.
1. Even if an angel from heaven taught a different gospel than what they had received would be cursed (Galatians 1:8-9).
  2. When the Jewish converts tried to force their teaching on Paul and Barnabas, in having Titus circumcised, they refused to give in to them even for an hour (Galatians 2:1-3).
  3. Paul even withstood Peter! Peter had taught the concept of all people being accepted equally before God but did not act in accordance with this belief (Galatians 2:11-14).
- B. The only standard we can use to make certain we stay on the right course is the revealed word of God (Colossians 3:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

## III. DON'T SOFT-PEDAL THE TRUTH

- A. In our desire to get along with people it is easy to just allow false ideas to pass as true. Often, we may say to ourselves that it isn't worth starting a fuss or causing trouble.
- B. But if one goes on and doesn't abide in the teachings of Christ, he does not have God (2 John 9).
1. This was a teaching about the nature of Christ.
  2. These false teachers were saying that he didn't really come in the flesh at all; He was God, but not a man. John called them anti-Christ.
  3. It is equally anti-Christ for one to declare that Jesus is a man and not God (John 1:1-2; Hebrews 1:1-3, 8; Colossians 2:9-10; Philippians 2:5-10).
    - a. A popular novel, *"The Da Vinci code,"* promotes the idea that Jesus is just a man. It claims He was married to Mary Magdalene and they had children. The claim is that the Catholic Church hid the truth on this matter to protect their teachings.
    - b. Those who teach such things are anti-Christ (2 John 1:7).
  4. There will always be those who teach things that are in opposition to the truth concerning the Deity Christ. We must stand against those who teach false doctrine (Titus 1:10-11).
  5. Sometimes it is right to push what people teach back into their face as Paul did with the desire for them to castrate themselves.

## Conclusion

1. *You are running well.* Since the day we believed, we have run well, but we must continue to run well if we hope to receive the prize – the crown of life.
2. *Adopt no other view.* In these days, more than ever, there are many false teachers, and just as many false teachings, that have gone out into the world, and for this reason we must be ever vigilant. We must reject anything and anyone that is not in accordance with the truth.
3. *To those who trouble us.* Paul wished that those who troubled the churches of Galatia would mutilate themselves. To those who trouble the churches today we not only resound this wish but warn them of their end (2 Peter 2:1).

*"But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!" (Galatians 1:8-9 NASB)*

# A WORLD OF INIQUITY

## *Learning to Tame the Tongue*

### Introduction

1. James observes that the tongue is capable of both good and evil.

*“With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God” (James 3:9 NASB)*

2. For the most part, though, the tongue is employed for evil.

a. James describes the tongue as, *“A world of iniquity...a restless evil and full of deadly poison”* (James 3:6, 8b).

b. No man is able to bring this beast (tongue) into complete subjection (James 3:8a).

3. The tongue wields great influence over the course of our lives; as small devices guide horses and ships, so our whole life is directed by what our tongues say. Speech is a force that can destroy, like a flame, and it can destroy our soul. Recognizing this power and its destructive potential should motivate us to work at mastering our tongues.

*“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises **self-control in all things**. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but **I discipline my body** and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified” (1 Corinthians 9:24-27 NASB)*

*“I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now **present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification**” (Romans 6:19 NASB)*

### I. MISUSE OF THE TONGUE

A. James describes the tongue as, *“A world of iniquity...a restless evil and full of deadly poison”* (James 3:6, 8b).

1. *“A world of iniquity...”*

“This is a very expressive phrase, and is similar to one which we often employ, as when we speak of a town as being a world in miniature. We mean by it that it is an epitome of the world; that all that there is in the world is represented there on a small scale. So when the tongue is spoken of as being ‘a world of iniquity,’ it is meant that all kinds of evil that are in the world are exhibited there in miniature” (Barnes).

2. *“...full of deadly poison”*

“He refers here to the tongues of serpents, supposed to be the means of conveying their poison into wounds made by their teeth. Throughout the whole of this poetic and highly declamatory description, St. James must have the tongue of the slanderer, calumniator, backbiter, whisperer, and tale-bearer, particularly in view” (Clark).

B. Generally speaking, there are two ways in which the tongue is used for evil<sup>3</sup>:

1. The promotion of self:

a. Flattery – commonly, to heap complimentary remarks on another with a view to influencing them for some personal advantage.

*“These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, **flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage**” (Jude 1:16 NASB)*

<sup>3</sup> This is by no means a comprehensive list.

1) One who flatters has a “double heart” (Psalms 12:2), i.e., “...the flatterer. He has one heart to give utterance to the words which he uses toward his neighbor, and another that conceals his real purpose or design” (Barnes).

2) It is a characteristic of the ungodly (Psalms 5:9<sup>4</sup>).

*“For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting” (Romans 16:18 NASB)*

3) Christians must not flatter from impure motives.

- b. Dissimulation: in speech, promoting oneself as being one thing, but in behaving contrary: hypocrisy (See Romans 2:17-24; Galatians 2:11-13). One purpose of such dissimulation is to give the impression of moral superiority. Christians must not speak hypocritically.
- c. Boasting: to glory or brag in one’s accomplishments or good works. The purpose is to elicit praise, admiration, and awe (cp. 1 Corinthians 4:7). All that we are and all that we have is of God (Acts 17:24-28; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11), and whatever we have should be used to the glory of God (1 Peter. 4:10). Christians must not boast.
- d. Exaggeration: to ‘go beyond’, e.g., “Thousands of people turned up for the meeting.” The truth, though, is that only 800 people turned up. “Thousands,” therefore, is an exaggeration. The purpose of exaggeration is to make something more noticeable or important; it gives a false impression. Such language can be used to emphasize a point but is often used to (i) make something or self appear more important than is the case, (ii) make something or someone appear worse than is the case. Christians must not exaggerate.
- e. Swearing: the use of legitimate words in an inappropriate context<sup>5</sup>; these are usually words of a sexual nature<sup>6</sup> (Ephesians 5:4; Colossians 3:8). Christians must not swear.
- f. Lying: this is to (i) state something that is untrue, (ii) deny or affirm something that is true or false, respectively, (iii) withhold or conceal information. Christians must not lie in any way whatsoever (Colossians 3:9).

## 2. The ruin of others:

- a. Maligning<sup>nt987</sup> – this is a general word meaning ‘to defame or speak evil’ of someone. Christians must not malign others (Titus 3:1-2).
- b. Gossip<sup>nt5587</sup> – this literally means, ‘to speak in one’s ears (in an evil sense).’ This describes one who receives and spreads malicious rumors and accusations (whether true or not). All such gossip must be avoided (2 Corinthians 12:20; Proverbs 16:28).
- c. Slander<sup>nt2636</sup> – This is synonymous with ‘gossip’ only done more openly. A Christian must not slander anyone (1 Peter 2:1, 12).
- d. Prating<sup>nt5396</sup> – This is to bring unjustified charges against someone. Christians must not bring unjustified charges against anyone (3 John 1:10).
- e. Judging<sup>nt2919</sup> – This when we criticize or find fault with another’s behavior. Christians must not criticize one another (Romans 4:14; James 4:12).

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<sup>4</sup> “...[the tongue] was employed to flatter others, with a view to lead them astray, or to make use of them for base and selfish purposes”

<sup>5</sup> My conscience will not allow me to give examples of the stronger swear words, but here are some of the milder words: ‘Damn or dam’, ‘twit’, ‘twot’, ‘pratt’, ‘crap’. Some Christian may ‘feel’ that such words do not constitute swear words but some do and are offended by their use; therefore, according to the scriptural principle, we should refrain from using such (Romans 14:21).

<sup>6</sup> Due to daily usage, even the use of such words in an appropriate context is still offensive to most people. It is advisable, then, to use a “friendly” synonym to avoid offence.

## Summary

1. James says the tongue is, “*A world of iniquity...*” (James 3:6).
2. We are all guilty of misusing our tongues because...

*“But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison” (James 3:8 NASB)*

3. We will now consider:

- a. The steps we must take to control this untamable beast.
- b. The proper use of the tongue.

## II. FIRST STEPS AND PRINCIPLES IN CONTROLLING THE TONGUE

- A. Why is it important to exercise control over the tongue?

1. Because death and life are in the power of the tongue.

*“Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit” (Proverbs 18:21 NASB)*

*“For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matthew 12:37 NASB)*

- a. As James teaches, the tongue is capable of both good and evil. Whether we are justified or condemned will be determined by the use of the tongue during our pilgrimage.
- b. Words are important because they reflect the content of the heart<sup>7</sup> (Matthew 12:34; 15:19).

*“The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; **for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.**” (Luke 6:45 NASB)*

“Speech is the index of the mind” (Sanaca)

2. Because a failure to control the tongue makes one’s religion vain:

*“If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man’s religion is worthless.” (James 1:26 NASB)*

“One might ‘think’ himself to be religious but genuine piety is evidenced by a temperance that permeates every area and aspect of one’s conduct. If there is any one thing in respect to which its influence is not felt, despite other evidences of piety that might exist, this will demonstrate that all those appearances of religion are vain” (*Quotes & Things*, Commentary; D. Collins).

3. Because of the tongue’s potency:

- a. Through gossip, slander, backbiting, prating, criticism, etc. we can destroy another’s character and ruin their lives.

*“Your tongue devises ruin, Like a sharp razor, O worker of deceit. You love evil more than good, Falsehood more than speaking what is right. You love all words that devour, O deceitful tongue.” (Psalms 52:2-4 NASB)*

“Character assassination is at once easier and surer than physical assault, and it involves far less risk for the assassin. It leaves him free to commit the same deed over and over again, and may, indeed, win him honors of a hero even on the entry of his victims” (Alan Barth).

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<sup>7</sup> However, it is possible to use speech that disguises what it is in the heart (Psalms 55:21; Proverbs 26:24-25).

- b. Through gracious words we build up, encourage, comfort, etc. our tongues ought to bring life and healing:

*“A wholesome tongue is a tree of life...” (Proverbs 15:4 KJV)*

*“The words of a man's mouth are as deep waters, and the wellspring of wisdom as a flowing brook” (Proverbs 18:4 KJV)*

B. The first steps toward control of the tongue.

1. It begins with confessing that we do indeed have a problem. James says...

*“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 KJV)*

- a. It is evident that we all lack control over our tongues.  
b. We may all fail in common areas but we all fail in specific areas that are unique to us that we must identify and confess (1 John 1:8-10).

2. We must then make a decision to exercise control over the tongue<sup>8</sup>. David made such a decision...

*“You have tried my heart; You have visited me by night; You have tested me and You find nothing; I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress” (Psalms 17:3 NASB)*

*“I have decided: I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me” (Psalms 39:1 KJV)*

3. We must be sure to elicit the help of God in prayer:

*“Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.” (Psalms 141:3 KJV)*

*“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” (Philippians 4:6 NASB)*

C. Before we consider the content of our speech, we need to consider some basic **principles**:

1. Think before you speak (Proverbs 29:20; James 1:19):

*“Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few” (Ecclesiastes 5:2 NASB)*

- a. Is what you are about to say defamatory or malicious of someone? Is what you are about to say unkind or hurtful to the hearer? Are you about to say something that you will later regret? (Proverbs 12:13; 18:7). Is what you are about to say the truth?  
b. It is important to *think* before we speak because it is from the heart (mind) that our words flow. Thus, words reveal the content of the mind (Luke 6:45).

2. *“Let your words be few”* (Ecclesiastes 5:2b; cp. Proverbs 17:27).

*“When there are many words, sin is unavoidable, But he who restrains his lips is wise.” (Proverbs 10:19 NASB)*

- a. *“Say what you have to say and leave it at that.”* Keep it short! Do not let *“uncomfortable silences”* compel you to repeat your words: some people have a habit of repeating the same thing over and over using slightly different wording. Also, avoid giving illustrations: some people seem to think you haven't got the point, and so they give endless illustrations until they think you've finally got the point. If people haven't got the point then *let them ask* for further explanation.

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<sup>8</sup> Cp. Job made a covenant with his eyes (Job 31:1)



- b. Restraining our tongues reduces the likelihood of transgressing in our speech, or saying something we may later regret (Proverbs 12:13; 18:7).
3. Speak clearly. There are several aspects to speaking clearly (this is not a comprehensive list):
- “So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.” (1 Corinthians 14:9 NASB)*
- “How do we communicate thoughts and ideas except through words? If we are to communicate effectively then it is essential that we choose the correct words and articulate each word clearly” (Quotes & Things, Thoughts, D. Collins)*
- a. Learn the language of the country/region in which you reside, and **speak it properly**.
  - b. Avoid using slang, figures of speech, abbreviations, etc. as these can make your speech unclear.
  - c. Increase your vocabulary. People often struggle to *“find the words”* to express their thoughts, and this inevitable leads to using slang, vulgarity, and vagueness (such as, “thing”, or “daubery”, etc). Suggestion: using a dictionary, learn the definitions of three new words every week.
  - d. Look people in the eye and speak at a volume that ensures others can hear you.
4. We must be careful to whom we speak and what we say:
- a. Don’t waste your breath on fools (Proverbs 23:9; Matthew 7:6; 1 Corinthians 2:14).
  - b. Others can take your words and distort them (Psalms 56:5; 2 Peter 3:16).

### III. THE PROPER AND IMPROPER USE OF THE TONGUE

#### A. In general, concerning our speech...

##### 1. It should always be with grace:

*“Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person” (Colossians 4:6 NASB)*

##### a. Graceful speech:

*“A Christian’s speech must demonstrate that he is governed by the principles of religion, and that there is sincere devotion in the heart” (Quotes & Things, Commentary, D. Collins).*

##### b. Speech that is seasoned with salt:

*“Here the meaning seems to be, that our conversation should be seasoned with piety or grace in a way similar to that in which we employ salt in our food. It makes it wholesome and palatable. So with our conversation. If it be not imbued with the spirit of piety, it is flat, insipid, unprofitable, injurious. The spirit of piety will make it what it should be - useful, agreeable, beneficial to mankind. This does not mean that our conversation is to be always, strictly speaking, religious - wherever we may be - any more than our food should be mere salt; but it means that, whatever be the topic, the spirit of piety should be diffused through it - as the salt in our food should properly season it all - whatever the article of food may be” (Barnes).*

##### 2. It should always be useful to the hearer:

*“Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear” (Ephesians 4:29 NASB)*

*“So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.” (Romans 14:19 NASB)*

B. The tongue should be employed for the following...

1. Fortifying (2 Chronicles 15:8; John 16:33; Acts 23:11; 27:25).

2. Encouraging (Acts 11:23; Colossians 4:8; 1 Thessalonians 3:2; Titus 2:3-4).

*“Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:11 NASB)*

*“But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called Today, so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.” (Hebrews 3:13 NASB)*

3. Comforting (Proverbs 12:18; 2 Corinthians 2:6-7; 1 Thessalonians 4:18; 2 Thessalonians 2:17; Ephesians 6:22).

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” (2 Corinthians 1:3-4 NASB)*

4. Imparting Peace (Proverbs 16:24; 2 Chronicles 32:8; John 16:33; Ephesians 6:15).

*“How lovely on the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who announces peace And brings good news of happiness, Who announces salvation, And says to Zion, Your God reigns!” (Isaiah 52:7 NASB)*

*“A soothing tongue is a tree of life...” (Proverbs 15:4 NASB)*

5. Provoking to love and good works:

*“And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:24 NASB)*

6. Mirth (1 Kings 5:7; Nehemiah 8:9-12).

7. Leading others to faith (John 8:30; Acts 5:20; 11:13-14).

*“The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple” (Psalms 119:130 NASB)*

8. Admonition<sup>9</sup> and Rebuke<sup>10</sup> (Acts 20:31; 1 Corinthians 4:14; Colossians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; 1 Timothy 5:20; 2 Timothy 4:2).

*“Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.” (Luke 17:3 NASB)*

*“And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.” (Romans 15:14 NASB)*

C. The kind of speech we must avoid:

1. Gossip, slander, and backbiting (Proverbs 16:28; Ephesians 4:31; 1 Peter 2:1).

2. Things that stir up negative emotions (Proverbs 10:12; 15:1; 28:25).

3. Abusive and offensive speech (Colossians 3:8; Ephesians 5:4).

4. Lying, deceitfulness, and flattery (Proverbs 26:28; Colossians 3:9; 1 Peter 2:1; 3:10; Jude 1:16).

5. Boasting (Psalms 17:10; James 4:16).

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<sup>9</sup> To gently reprove.

<sup>10</sup> To some this may seem negative, but people do need to be admonished for their own good. However, we must take care to do so from the right motives and in a spirit of love (1 Corinthians 4:14; Galatians 6:1; 2 Thessalonians 3:15).

D. What should you do if others begin to gossip, slander, etc.?

1. Rebuke:

*“He who rebukes a man will afterward find more favor Than he who flatters with the tongue.”*  
(Proverbs 28:23 NASB)

2. An expression of disapproval.

*“The north wind brings forth rain, And a backbiting tongue, an angry countenance”* (Proverbs 25:23 NASB)

3. The following procedure might be useful:

a. Take the person aside and seek to restore them:

*“Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted”*  
(Galatians 6:1 NASB)

b. You may need to involve others:

*“If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector”* (Matthew 18:15-17 NASB)

### Conclusion

1. Each one of us has to **face the fact** that we do not have perfect control over our tongues (James 3:8a). The situation with us is, more than likely, more serious than we might think; especially if we have never ‘made a covenant with our tongue to speak no evil’ (Psalms 17:3; cp. Job 31:1).
2. This study has revealed the manifold ways in which we might transgress with the tongue, and an examination of the way we use our tongues in daily life will help us to identify those uses of the tongue that must be brought under subjection. This requires effort and honesty. It is essential to realize that, **if we do not bring the tongue under subjection, our religion is vain** (James 1:26).
3. Control of the tongue begins, then, with a confession of guilt, followed by a decision (repentance) to *“keep my mouth with a bridle”* (Psalms 39:1).
4. We begin to exercise control of the tongue by applying the following principles: think before you speak, let your words be few, and speak clearly.
5. The following scriptures sum up the proper and improper use of the tongue:

*“Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.”* (Colossians 4:6 NASB)

*“But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth.”* (Colossians 3:8 NASB)



# ACCURATELY HANDLING THE WORD OF TRUTH

## *The Misuse Of Scripture*

### Introduction

1. “There’s always more than one interpretation”, and, “You can make the Bible say anything you like” are two sayings that many people quote to undermine the inspiration, inerrancy and authority of the Scriptures, and to justify the doctrinal diversity among the churches.

2. Is there any truth to these sayings?

a. While it is true that several different people may each have their own interpretation of a passage of Scripture, we need to realize that there is only one true interpretation<sup>11</sup> and that all the false interpretations are due to a failure to follow and apply the rules of interpretation<sup>11</sup> and careless research. Here is an example of Paul correcting a false interpretation:

*“Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God. What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it? May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar, as it is written, that You may be justified in Your words, and prevail when You are judged. But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is He? (I am speaking in human terms.) May it never be! For otherwise, how will God judge the world? But if through my lie the truth of God abounded to His glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner? And why not say (as we are slanderously reported and as some claim that we say), Let us do evil that good may come? Their condemnation is just” (Romans 3:1-8 NASB)*

1) It has been admitted that some had not believed the gospel, but as one of the results of this sin, the character of God as a just Being, shone out all the more. Some had argued that *if my sin serves to show the righteousness of God, then let us sin and so bring more glory to God.*

2) Well that’s one interpretation! But Paul denies teaching such a thing and condemns those who subscribe to such a belief.

b. While it is true that you can make the Bible say anything you want, we need to realize that the Bible only teaches one truth, and that any other false teachings are the result of a failure to follow and apply the rules of interpretation and careless or research. Here is an example of making the Bible say what you want when you don’t follow and apply the rules of interpretation:

*“You heard that I said to you, ‘I go away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, for **the Father is greater than I**” (John 14:28 NASB)*

*“Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of **our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus**” (Titus 2:13 NASB)*

1) Taking John 14:28 **alone**, one could teach that since Jesus Himself said that the Father is greater than He, it follows, then, that Jesus cannot be God. Taking Titus 2:13, we can say that Paul refers to Jesus as God.

2) Does the Bible teach two different things? No. A closer examination of the context of John 14:28 reveals that this verse refers to the voluntary subordination of Jesus during His earthly life when He willingly placed Himself in submission to the Father. It says nothing about His nature, only His temporary rank on earth. Thus, the “*greater than*” refers to His *position* rather than His person.

3. The aim of this lesson is to encourage us all to learn about the proper rules of interpretation so that we can avoid misusing the Scriptures and increase our knowledge of God’s word. This will increase our assurance of what we believe and give us greater confidence in teaching others the truth.

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<sup>11</sup> The science of interpretation is called hermeneutics.

## I. THE VARIOUS WAYS IN WHICH THE SCRIPTURES ARE MISUSED

There are many wrong ways to handle the Scriptures but only one right way.

A. Here are three of the most common ways in which God's word is misused:

1. **Proof texting**<sup>12</sup>. There is nothing wrong, as such, with this method of presenting what the Bible teaches but it is a method that is frequently abused. How is it abused?
  - a. When a person has already decided what the Bible teaches on a particular topic and then searches the Scriptures for verses that seem to back up his belief<sup>13</sup>. This, then, is the first error: This person's whole approach to the Scriptures is wrong because he has already decided what the Bible teaches and does not let the word teach him (Acts 17:11).
  - b. When a person has gathered enough verses that appear to back up his position, he stops searching. This means that there may be many other verses that speak on the subject: some that appear to back his views and others that oppose his views. So he is really speaking on a topic of which he knows little about. This, then, is the second error: This person has failed to gather all the passages that pertain to the subject (Psalms 119:160; Acts 20:27).
2. **Twisting the Scriptures**. Using this method, a person can quote actual Scripture but apply a meaning to it that the author never intended. Here are two examples:
  - a. Paul told the Corinthians not to associate with immoral persons and some had twisted it to mean that he forbade contact with *any* immoral person. Paul then shows that such a belief was ridiculous because it would mean that one would have to leave the world. He simply meant they were not to keep company with an immoral brother (1 Corinthians 5:13).
  - b. In the Parable Of The Talents, the master praised the slaves who had done business and made a good profit, but rebuked the one who done nothing. The master said he should have put the money in the bank so he would at least have had some interest to collect (Luke 19:11-23). Now I do not want to enter into a debate as to whether a church should or shouldn't keep its money in a bank account where it can earn interest, the only point I wish to make is that this verse doesn't authorize it. But, unbelievably, I have heard some quote this passage to justify it. There are many lessons to be learned from this passage but how we handle the Lord's money is not one of them.
3. **Misquoting Scriptures**. There are many Scriptures that people quote that are either misquotations or not actually in the Bible at all! Doing so misleads and deceives people.
  - a. "*Money is the root of all evil.*" This is a misquotation of 1 Timothy 6:10 that actually says, "*For the love of money is the root of all sorts of evil...*" Another is, "*The lion shall lie down with the lamb.*" This is a misquotation of Isaiah 11:6 that says, "*The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them.*" Another is, "*God works in mysterious ways,*" which is not even in the Bible!
  - b. When Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted, Satan took Him to the pinnacle of the temple and said, "*If you are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning You'; and 'on their hands they will bear You up, so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone'*" (Matthew 4:6). The first quote is from Psalm 91:11: "*For He will give His angels charge concerning you, **To guard you in all your ways.***" Satan saw fit to leave out the latter part of the quote as it was contrary to his purpose.

B. The most common reasons for the misuse of the Scriptures are to deceive, manipulate, and control (Cp. Ephesians 4:14).

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<sup>12</sup> Also known as anthologizing.

<sup>13</sup> Sometimes called *the hunt and gather method* because they know what they are looking for and gather the verses that support their view.

## II. THE DANGEROUS CONSEQUENCES OF MISUSING THE SCRIPTURES

Some people think the misuse of Scripture is harmless but the consequences of misuse are very serious indeed.

- A. How it affects those who are deceived. Whether we wittingly or unwittingly misuse the Scriptures, the consequences are the same. What we'll do here is just list some of the consequences of false teaching in general:
1. It can deprive the needy of the help that God wants them to have.
    - a. Jesus exposed how the Pharisees and scribes neglected their duty toward their parents when they set aside the law of God in favor of their own tradition (Matthew 15:1-6).
    - b. Jesus said, "*For you always have the poor with you*" (Matthew 26:11), and some actually quote this as a justification for not helping the poor. The attitude being: "*There's no use in helping the poor because it won't solve the problem.*"
  2. It can overthrow people's faith. Paul names Hymenaeus and Philetus as those who taught that "*the resurrection is already past.*" It is this teaching that had overthrown the faith of some (2 Timothy 2:15-18; cp. 2 Peter 2:1).
  3. It can lead people into immorality. Jude warns of the false teachers whose teaching led people to believe they could live a life of sensuality with impunity (Jude 1:4).
- B. How it affects those who misuse the Scriptures. This, again, applies to those who wittingly or unwittingly misuse the Scriptures.
1. You are feeding people's belief that you can make the Bible say anything.
  2. It makes your worship vain (Mark 7:7).
  3. You are marked out or set aside for condemnation (Jude 1:4; 2 Peter 2:3; Revelation 22:18-19).

## III. RESPONSIBILITIES AND GUIDELINES

We must learn how to study and watch out for signs of going astray.

- A. In view of the various ways there are of misusing the Scriptures and the condemnation that awaits false teachers, we had better be sure that we are handling the word of God accurately. One might be tempted to say, "*If this is the case, then it is better not to teach at all!*" This reminds us of the slave who was given one talent: "*Another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I kept put away in a handkerchief; for I was afraid of you, because you are an exacting man; you take up what you did not lay down and reap what you did not sow.'*" (Luke 19:20-21). Rather, we should ensure that we...
1. Search the Scriptures for all that God has to say on a subject.
  2. Examine the context to find the true interpretation.
  3. Research the background of traditions and customs that may throw light on the meaning.
- But these are only a few of the rules of interpretation.
- B. Here are some general guidelines: you need to stop and think when...
1. What you believe, teach, or practice cannot be found in the Scriptures.
  2. What you believe, teach, or practice makes void the word of God.
  3. What you believe or teach leads to immorality or any evils.
  4. What you believe, teach, or practice causes conflict and division.

## **Conclusion**

1. There are many possible ways of misusing the Scriptures, and in this lesson we have considered just three of the more common misuses: Careless proof texting, applying a different meaning to a passage that the author never intended, and misquoting verses. Whether wittingly or unwittingly, we are deceiving and leading people astray.
2. The misuse of Scripture has serious consequences: the needy are deprived of help, the faith of some is overthrown, and people are led into immorality. Those who teach error undermine the authority and integrity of the Scriptures in the minds of people by feeding their belief that *you can make the Bible say anything you want*, and it means you can be sure you are set aside for condemnation.
3. Each of us has a responsibility to ensure that what we believe, teach, and practice is Scriptural. This means that we need to search the Scriptures, examine the context, and research the background. We need to learn all the rules of interpretation.

## **Application**

It hoped that this lesson has...

1. Rekindled a healthy fear and respect for God's word.
2. Stirred up a desire to study the Scriptures in accordance with the rules of interpretation.
3. Caused us to consider our beliefs and practices in the light of the Scriptures.



# AN ANALYSIS OF THE STEPS OF SALVATION

*Believe, Repent, Confess and be Baptized*

## Introduction

1. We can all answer the question, “*What must I do to be saved?*” We know we must hear, believe, repent, confess, and be baptised.
2. But it is not enough to just tell others they need to BRCB, we must make sure we tell people *what* they are to believe, *explain* what repentance means and involves, etc.

## I. FROM WHAT HAVE WE BEEN SAVED?

- A. We have been saved from the consequences of our sins (Romans 6:23; Revelation 1:5).
  1. All unrighteousness and transgressions of the law is sin (1 John 3:4; 5:17).
  2. All have sinned (Romans 3:23).
- B. We have been saved from an eternal separation from God (Romans 6:23; Isaiah 59:1-2).
- C. We have been saved from eternal punishment (Luke 16:22-23, 26).

## II. BELIEVE

- A. Believe that God came in the flesh (John 1:1, 14).
- B. Believe that Jesus is the Son of God (Matthew 16:13-20).
- C. Believe He died for our sins on the cross (1 Corinthians 15:3).
- D. Believe God raised Him up from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:4).
- E. Continue to believe (Hebrews 3:12).

## III. REPENT

- A. All men are commanded to repent (Acts 17:30). “*Denoting change of place or condition... to exercise the mind, think, comprehend. To repent, change the mind, relent. Theologically, it involves regret or sorrow, accompanied by a true change of heart toward God*” (CWSD).
- B. Turning from sin involves doing good works (Acts 26:20).
- C. We need to continue to repent, even though we have obeyed the gospel (Cp. Acts 8:13-22, 1 Corinthians 5:1-7).

## IV. CONFESS

- A. Must confess that Jesus is Lord (Romans 10:9-10).
- B. Must confess Jesus before men (Matthew 10:32. Cp. Revelation 3:5).
- C. Denial must not come from our lips (Matthew 10:33).

## V. BAPTISM

- A. For those who believe (Mark 16:16).
- B. For the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).
- C. Not continuous; repent and pray to be cleansed (1 John 1:7-10; Cp. Acts 8:13-22).

## Conclusion

1. Those things that God requires of us to do to be saved are not things we do just once and then forget about; they are things a person does throughout all their life (baptism being the exception).
2. However, we ought to take heed lest there arise in any of us an evil heart of unbelief, for we stand or fall by it.
3. Many people believe that you do not have to be baptised for the forgiveness of sins. This is because they view baptism as work. Consider the following account of Naaman's healing:

*“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 became angry at the suggestion that he should be baptised to be cured of his leprosy. Many today become angry at the suggestion that one must be baptised for the remission of sins.
- b. But Naaman was persuaded to obey the Lord's commandment and he was cleansed of his leprosy. Was Naaman cleansed by his own efforts, by his own works, or by the grace of God? I submit that he was healed by the grace of God. Likewise, when we submit to the Lord's command to be baptised for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38), we are spiritually healed by God's grace. Baptism cannot, by no stretch of the imagination, be said to be a meritorious work; our obedience to the gospel is the point at which the blood of Jesus washes away a person's sins.

## APOSTASY

### *Are You Standing For The Truth Or Encouraging Apostasy?*

#### Introduction

##### 1. Where do you stand?

*“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth” (Matthew 6:24 NASB)*

*“Elijah came near to all the people and said, How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him. But the people did not answer him a word” (1 Kings 18:21 NASB)*

*“You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons” (1 Corinthians 10:21 NASB)*

##### a. As Christians, each of us must decide where we stand:

- 1) Is God your master or mammon?
- 2) Do you serve God or Satan?
- 3) Are in fellowship with the Lord or demons?

##### b. You may say, “God is my master whom I serve and I have fellowship with His Son<sup>14</sup>.”

##### 2. Those of you who have studied church history will know that apostasy takes place by means of small departures from the truth over a period of time.

##### a. “...small departures...over a period of time” has been Satan’s stratagem<sup>15</sup> throughout the centuries to effect an apostasy; of which we are not unaware.

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

##### b. While it is true that Satan is the influence, the agents through whom such departures and innovations are introduced are human beings:

- 1) Jesus and His disciples were in the house of Simon the leper (Matthew 26:6-15). It was here that “*Satan entered into Judas*” and then he went to the chief priests to discuss how he might betray Him (Luke 22:3-4). We should not suppose that Satan personally entered into his body but rather...

*“...only that he brought him under his influence; he filled his mind with an evil passion, and led him on to betray his Master” (Barnes).*

- 2) Paul refers to false teachers as servants of Satan:

*“For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds” (2 Corinthians 11:13-15 NASB)*

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<sup>14</sup> See 1 John 1:3

<sup>15</sup> An elaborate or deceitful scheme contrived to deceive or evade (Wordweb)

3. Pertinent<sup>16</sup> questions:

- a. What can we do to ensure that we are not lead astray by false teaching?
- b. How can we ensure that our worship is Scriptural and avoid unscriptural innovations?
- c. In what ways can we avoid encouraging the apostasy that is taking place in our generation?

**I. EDIFICATION**

*“Also it is not good for a person to be without knowledge...” (Proverbs 19:2 NASB)*

*“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...” (Hosea 4:6 NASB)*

A. Ignorance is not good because one may then easily be *“tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine”* (Ephesians 4:14), and this can only lead to apostasy.

1. Paul was naturally concerned for the souls of his Jewish brethren: they were lost because of their ignorance and needed to hear the gospel. Yet he acknowledged their zeal and lamented...

*“For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge” (Romans 10:2 NASB)*

2. There were brethren in the church at Corinth who were without knowledge concerning the resurrection of the dead. Paul says of them, *“For some have not the knowledge of God”* (1 Corinthians 15:34). Mike Willis comments...

*“Those who claimed to have superior knowledge that led them to deny the resurrection might have had greater acquaintance with Greek philosophy. However, they lacked knowledge of God. And their ignorance brought peril to their own souls and the souls of others. They were not excused because they were ignorant; nor were they to be given greater toleration for this reason. This doctrine was false and would lead to apostasy; they could not be tolerated!” (Mike Willis, Truth Commentaries).*

B. The Scriptures abound in exhortations to increase in knowledge (Colossians 3:16; 2 Timothy 2:15; 2 Peter 1:5; 3:18) and reveal the purpose and benefits of such (Philippians 1:9; Colossians 3:10; 2 Peter 1:2; 2:20).

1. It is only as we increase in knowledge that it becomes less likely that we should be *“tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming”* (Ephesians 4:14).
2. It is through knowledge of God’s word that we are able to *“test the spirits”* (1 John 4:1; cp. Revelation 2:2).

*“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)*

3. It is through knowledge that we are able to guard against unauthorized practices and innovations:

*“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. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all by the authority of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father” (Colossians 3:16-17 NASB)*

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<sup>16</sup> Having precise or logical relevance to the matter at hand (Wordweb).

## II. HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THE WORKS OF DARKNESS

*“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)*

*“For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.” (2 John 1:7-11 NASB)*

A. It is a very seriousness thing to have fellowship with those who do not abide in the teaching of Christ.

1. We are not to have fellowship with those who reject the teaching of Christ.

- a. *“For many deceivers have gone out into the world.”* The Scriptures abound with warnings of false teachers (Matthew 7:15; 24:11; Mark 13:22; 2 Corinthians 11:13-14; Galatians 2:4; 1 John 4:1).
- b. *“Who will secretly introduce destructive heresies.”* Their doctrines are destructive (See 2 Timothy 2:18; Galatians 5:1-10).
- c. *“Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God.”* Many are willing to overlook doctrinal differences for the sake of a pseudo unity. But those who do not abide in the teaching of Christ, do not have God.
- d. *“If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting.”* We are not to have any social intercourse or bid Godspeed to anyone who is not abiding in the teaching of Christ. We must avoid them (Romans 16:17).
- e. *“For one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.”* When we show hospitality and bid Godspeed to false teachers, we not only encourage them in the evil works, but we find ourselves in fellowship with them. What a dire warning this is!

2. False teachers and false doctrine must be exposed.

*“Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them” (Ephesians 5:11 NASB)*

*“Holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain.” (Titus 1:9-11 NASB)*

B. Practical steps:

1. Avoid fellowship with those who do not abide in the teaching of Christ.

- a. Be careful about who you invite to speak for the church.
- b. Do not receive brethren that are not abiding in the teaching of Christ and do not bid them Godspeed.
- c. Do not have association with churches where their organization, worship, and work is unscriptural.
- d. Do not condone unscriptural works and meetings by sending donations or by attending them.

2. Edify the brethren.
  - a. Preach and teach on...
    - 1) Fundamental doctrines.
    - 2) The Scriptural organization of the church.
    - 3) The Scriptural worship of the church.
    - 4) The Scriptural work of the church.
  - b. Expose the errors of the unscriptural organization, worship, and work of the church.

### **Conclusion**

1. Apostasy takes place gradually over a period of time.
  - a. This is achieved by the introduction of false doctrine in connection with fundamental tenets, organization, worship, and work.
  - b. The success of this method is dependant upon an attitude of ignorance and apathy.
2. There are two ways we can guard against apostasy:
  - a. Through a program of edification.
  - b. By being selective in regards to whom we allow to preach and teach.
3. We must also be sure we are not supporting and encouraging those who walk in error.
  - a. Do not have fellowship with those who are not abiding in the teaching of Christ, neither bid them Godspeed.
  - b. Do not support meetings, lectures, schools, colleges, camps, etc. that are funded or run by “*churches*” that are not abiding in the doctrine of Christ.
4. Are you standing for the truth or encouraging apostasy?

### **Questions**

1. How does apostasy take place?
2. Through what agency does Satan seek to lead the church into apostasy?
3. What is so bad about being ignorant? Isn't ignorance bliss?
4. What was Paul's desire for the Colossian brethren? (Colossians 1:9-10).
5. What steps can a congregation take to guard against false teachers?
6. How is bidding a false teacher “*Godspeed*” participating in his evil deeds?
7. What false teachings and practices exist in many congregations today?

# ARE YOU A PRACTICING CHRISTIAN?

## *The Testing Ground*

### Introduction

#### 1. James says:

*“Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and **receive...the...word**, which is able to save your souls. **But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only**, deceiving your own selves”*  
(James 1:21-22)

##### a. James says we ought to *receive* the word. The word, *receive*, means to ‘accept’. As did the Thessalonians:

*“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye **received the word of God** which ye heard of us, ye **received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God**, which effectually worketh also in you that believe”* (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

##### b. But to *receive* the word of God is not enough! What we receive, we must also **put into practice**. For faith by itself is of no value:

*“What does it profit, my brethren, though a man say he has faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say to them, Depart in peace, be warmed and filled; notwithstanding you give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? **Even so faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone**”*  
(James 2:14-17)

##### c. Further, believing that one is saved because one is a hearer of the word (only) is a self-inflicted delusion. Such people believe (sincerely) that, as long as they receive the word they are saved and that they can continue to live a life sowing to the flesh without consequence. Such deceit is perhaps more common than we think...listen to what Paul says to the Corinthians:

*“Do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be 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”* (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)

#### 2. Are you a practicing Christian?

##### a. I guess most of us would like to think that we are!

##### b. But how do you make such a judgment?

- 1) Is your judgment based on the fact that you attend all the meetings?
- 2) Or is it based on the fact that you don't do anything really bad?

#### 3. What I want to do in this lesson is help each of us determine whether we are really practicing Christians by showing how and where we make such a judgment.

### I. PRACTICAL BENEVOLENCE

#### A. James says that pure and undefiled religion is to, “*visit*<sup>17</sup> *the orphans and widows in the distress*” (James 1:27a).

1. James is not here saying that these two things constitute the whole of religion and that there are no other things essential to pure and undefiled religion.
2. His point is that, ‘**if a person is genuinely religious, it will lead them to a life of practical benevolence.**’ Visiting orphans and widows are merely specimens or examples.

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<sup>17</sup> The word ‘visit’ denotes, ‘to inspect’, ‘to relieve’.

*“Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works”* (Titus 2:14)

3. Practical benevolence has always been regarded as an essential thing in true or genuine religion:

a. God has always demanded that genuine religion lead to a life of practical benevolence:

*“Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy”* (Psalms 82:3)

*“Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow”* (Isaiah 1:17)

b. To do so is to imitate God who is the father of the fatherless and defender of the widow:

*“A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in His holy habitation”* (Psalms 68:5)

*“For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, who does not regard persons or take bribes: He executes the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loves the stranger, in giving him food and raiment”* (Deuteronomy 10:17-18)

B. Pure and undefiled religion in practice:

*“A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise”* (Luke 10:30-37)

1. Do you show hospitality toward strangers and brethren? (1 Timothy 5:10; 1 Peter 4:9).
2. Do you relieve the afflicted (e.g., orphans and widows)? (James 1:27).
3. Do you provide needful things for the poor (James 2:15-16; Galatians 2:10).

## II. PRACTICAL HOLINESS

A. James also says that, pure and undefiled religion is to, *“keep oneself unspotted by the world”* (James 1:27b).

1. The word *unspotted* denotes ‘undefiled’, ‘unblemished’, ‘unstained’.
2. We must live holy lives, unstained by the sins of the world.
3. This means:

a. Not allowing ourselves to conform to the principles by which atheists live:

*“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 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 12:1-2)

b. There can be no compromise because...



*“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. **If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.** For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever”* (1 John 2:15-17)

4. His point is that, **‘if a person is genuinely religious, it will lead them to a life of holiness; being separated from the world.’**

B. Pure and undefiled religion in practice:

1. We must exercise self-control at all times:

*“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, **denying ungodliness and worldly lusts**, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world”* (Titus 2:11-12)

2. Our words must be pure at all times:

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

- a. Are you guilty of gossiping and slander? (Colossians 3:8).
- b. Can you only find bad things to say about others? (Galatians 5:14-15). [Are you rude and abusive to your spouse and children?].

### Conclusion

1. As Christians, we ought to receive the word of God, i.e., accept it for what it is – the word of God – and believe it. But we must be careful not to deceive ourselves – we must be doers of the word and not hearers only. **We must put into practice what we have received.**
2. James teaches us that, pure and undefiled religion will lead to a life of:
  - a. Practical benevolence (James 1:27a).
  - b. Practical holiness (James 1:27b).
3. There are two things we can do to help us determine whether we truly are practicing Christians:
  - a. Consider your day-to-day behavior:
    - 1) Are you practicing the benevolence toward your neighbors and brethren as you ought?
    - 2) Is your day-to-day behavior any different from other people of the world? Are you denying the lusts of the flesh and exercising the proper control over your tongue?
  - b. Ponder this question: if a member of the church here were to interview your relatives, friends, and neighbors, what would they say about you? How would they describe your character? (Cp. 1 Timothy 3:7; 5:9-10).
4. Each of us falls short of the glory of God in some respect (Romans 3:23), and none of us can claim to be without sin (1 John 1:8). Therefore:
  - a. Let this be our attitude toward one another:

*“And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you”* (Ephesians 4:32)
  - b. And let us strive to be practicing Christians:

*“Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed” (James 1:21-25)*

## ARE YOU PREPARED FOR WAR?

### Introduction

1. Thomas doubted the Lords' resurrection (John 20:25) but remained faithful until death. Job had much to complain about but did not curse God (Job 1:22; 2:10). Jesus was tempted on many occasions and in all points but did not sin (Luke 4:1-13; 22:39-46; Hebrews 4:15).
2. There are many things that might cause us to fall: doubts, anxiety, persecution, temptations, cares of this world, love of money, circumstances, pride, etc.
3. In this lesson we will seek to answer the following questions:
  - a. What effects do doubts, temptations and circumstances have on us if left unchecked?
  - b. Why do all these things happen to us?
  - c. What can we do about these doubts and temptations when they arise?
  - d. Why aren't things going better for me?

4. We begin by quoting the following scriptures:

*“Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able” (Luke 15:24).*

*“Narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matthew 7:14).*

*“And all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12).*

*“Resist him (Satan), steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brethren in the world” (1 Peter 5:9).*

### I. LET BATTLE COMMENCE

*“Order the buckler and shield, and draw near to battle!” (Jeremiah 46:3).*

- A. *“Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts?”*

1. We may on occasions doubt the existence of God.
2. We may cast doubt on the Bible's inspiration.
3. We may even have reason to doubt our sincerity!

*“Do not be unbelieving, but believing” (John 20:27)*

- B. We may face great temptations.

1. Tempted to go back into the world, e.g., Demas (2 Timothy 4:10).
2. We may consider all temptations to hard to resist (Consider 1 Peter 4:4).
3. We may have a particular weakness, e.g., King David's' weakness seemed to be women (1 Samuel 25:39; 2 Samuel 11:1-5; 1 Chronicles 14:3).

*“Resist the Devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).*

- C. We may be unhappy with our circumstances.

1. Our living conditions might not be to our liking.
2. Our careers or education may not be going as we would like.
3. Perhaps we seem to have more than our share of disasters.

D. These things lead to unbelief, despair, grumbling.

**Chart 1**



*“And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content” (1 Timothy.6:8).*

## II. WHY DO ALL THESE THINGS HAPPEN TO US?

*“Who is the wise man who may understand this?”*

A. We are engaged in a war.

1. When Satan failed to defeat the Man Child (Jesus) he turned on the woman (spiritual Zion), but failed, so he went away to make war with 'the rest of her seed' (the saints) (Revelation 12:13, 17).
2. It is a spiritual war (Ephesians 6:12).
3. It is a war that is real and can be felt (Romans 7:14-19).

*“Now when they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, and will kill them” (Revelation 11:7).*

B. *“He (Satan) desires to sift you as wheat”*

1. The dragon seeks to destroy you (1 Peter 5:8).
2. Satan is persecuting you (Revelation 12:13).
3. The Devil is tempting you to the limit (see 1 Corinthians 10:13 > Hebrews 12:4 and e.g. Satan tempting Jesus (Luke 4:1-13; 22:44).
4. The serpent is trying to deceive you (2 Corinthians 4:4 > 11:12-15).

*“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the Devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).*

C. The Lord may be testing you (Read Genesis 22:1-12 - The testing of Abraham's faith).

1. Do we not sing, *“Search me and try me, my Master today?”* [Song 169 “Have Thine Own Way”]. (Cp. Psalms 26:2; 139:23-24).
2. *“I the Lord search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways”* (Jeremiah 17:10).
3. The Lord tests us to see whether we will keep His commandments or not (Deuteronomy 8:2).
4. False prophets serve to test whether we love the Lord with all our hearts (Deuteronomy 13:3).
5. Through the fire of trials and affliction the Lord refines and purifies us (Zechariah 13:9 > 1 Peter 1:6-7).

6. To teach us the value of spiritual things (Deuteronomy 8:3).
7. Such trials help us grow spiritually (James 1:2-4) and may even be the Lord's discipline (Hebrews 12:3-11).

*“That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:7).*

### III. WHAT CAN WE DO?

*“Now therefore, consider what you should do” (Judges 18:14).*

- A. Strengthen the foundation upon which your faith rests to dispel future doubts (Hebrews 11:1). [Be ready to give an answer]. Examining Christian evidences will strengthen our faith and conviction.
- B. Protect yourself - put on the amour of God (Ephesians 6:10-13).
- C. Be prepared to fight back.
  1. We wrestle and war (Ephesians 6:12; 2 Corinthians 10:3-4; 1 Timothy 1:18; James 4:1).
  2. Resist him and he will flee. Say no, he cannot force you (1 Corinthians 10:13).
  3. Use the sword of the Spirit (Jesus did) (Luke 4:4, 8, 12).
- D. Detach yourself from worldly desires, pleasures, and ambition (Hebrews 11:24-25) and be content with the things you have (Philippians 4:11; 1 Timothy 6:8; Hebrews 13:5).
- E. Give yourself over to the Lord and be led by His Spirit (Romans 8:14; Galatians 5:18).

*“In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried out to my God; He heard my voice from His temple, and my cry came before Him, even to His ears” (Psalms 18:6).*

### Conclusion

1. The faith we have is more precious than gold, and as long as we live in this world, the Lord will try and test our faith, while Satan will seek to destroy it.
2. It is vital, then, that our faith rests upon a solid foundation and that we have prepared ourselves for war.

*“Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall” (2 Peter 1:2-10)*



# ARE YOU SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES?

*Why Studying Is Important*

## Introduction

1. Over the past eighteen years I have spoken with many religious people from various economic and religious backgrounds. The one observation that disturbs me most with those who claim to be religious is their lack of biblical knowledge.

a. Some people appear to be very religious and spiritual<sup>18</sup> but have little knowledge of what the Scriptures teach on a particular subject.

b. Some people appear to be very knowledgeable but are merely resounding what they have been taught from the pulpit.

*“Also it is not good for a person to be without knowledge...” (Proverbs 19:2 NASB)*

*“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge....” (Hosea 4:6 NASB)*

2. Ignorance of the Scriptures among God’s people is simply due to people not studying. The reasons people do not study are...

a. No desire.

b. Do not know how.

c. Silly excuses, e.g., *“I’m too busy.”*

d. There is no need for me to study.

3. In this lesson, we shall expound on the following:

a. Why people think they do not need to study.

b. Why you need to study.

c. What studying means.

[What are the principles that have shaped our attitudes?]

## I. RESTORATION PRINCIPLES

A. From reformation to restoration.

1. The period known as the ‘reformation’ began with Martin Luther when he questioned the Scripturalness of many of the practices of the Catholic Church.

2. Shortly thereafter, there was an explosion of “*rebellion*” against the established church. Many, like Luther, protested against many of the church’s current beliefs and practices and came to be known collectively as ‘Protestants’.

3. Many Protestant groups were formed, each with their own beliefs and practices. A particular group was often named after the founder or after the particular practice or doctrine to which they had called into question...

a. The Lutheran church was named after its founder Martin Luther (Even though he urged them not to do so).

b. The Presbyterian Church was named so because they believe they had restored the original office and function of the Presbytery.

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<sup>18</sup> In their behavior and speech: they may participate enthusiastically in the worship and delight in discussing the Scriptures.

4. There were soon hundreds of Protestant churches with new ones arising all the time. These churches were viewed collectively as the body or church of Christ; each particular group being viewed as a denomination.
5. Many were dissatisfied with this religious division and were convinced that all these religious bodies should and could be united under one banner. They believed this could be achieved by a complete return to the Bible.

B. The following principles were advocated to effect unity among all believers:

1. The principles:

- a. The inspired Scriptures are the sole authority in all matters that pertain to belief and practice.
- b. Whatever the Bible says, we will believe it; and whatever it says we must do, we will do. Where the Bible does not sanction a particular belief or practice, we will abandon it.

2. It is based on these principles that we have the attitude that we have today:

a. We believe the Bible is the inspired word of God.

*“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16 NASB)*

b. We believe the Bible is our sole authority in all matters that pertain to life and godliness.

*“Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence” (2 Peter 1:3 NASB)*

*“Whatever you do in word or deed, do by the authority of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father” (Colossians 3:17 NASB)*

[Why is it so essential that we study the Bible when we have preachers and teachers?]

## II. WHY YOU NEED TO STUDY

A. An erroneous assumption:

1. Our preachers and teachers hold to the same principles as we do (this is generally true). Therefore, everything we are taught must be the truth! (**This is an assumption**).
2. Because of this assumption, a body of traditional doctrine can arise, and those who believe and teach otherwise are viewed with suspicion and labeled as modernists or false teachers. Whatever happened to the principle that says, *“Every individual has the right to read and interpret the Scriptures for themselves”*?
3. The assumption that, *“because our teachers hold to the same principles as us means that everything they teach is scriptural”*, can easily lead to an acceptance of a traditional body of teaching. Believing that we have been taught and know the truth, the need for **personal Bible study** seems superfluous and unnecessary.
4. But such an assumption is false because those who teach, despite holding to the same principles as us, are but *fallible* men.

B. Hard to convince.

1. Despite having said this, **you** may still be unconvinced that you need to study because you are convinced that the body of doctrine you have received is the truth.



a. Indeed, we are exhorted to...

*“Hold fast to the form of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 1:13 NASB)*

*“You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them” (2 Timothy 3:14 NASB)*

b. So what of those who were raised in the Mormon or the Catholic organizations! Would you give them this advice?

c. What Timothy was taught came from an *inspired* apostle. There are no inspired men today.

2. While it is true that we have a responsibility to pay heed to *uninspired* preachers and teachers, we also have a responsibility to study for ourselves and compare what they teach against the *inspired* Scriptures.

a. The apostle Paul was inspired but note the attitude of the Bereans:

*“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. Paul himself encouraged Christians to test what their inspired teachers taught:

*“Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:19-21 NASB)*

*“Let two or three [inspired] prophets speak, and let the others judge whether their doctrine is in accordance with the truth.” (1 Corinthians 14:29 NASB)*

c. The apostle John warned...

*“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)*

3. The consequences of failing to “test the spirits”:

a. It means we are naive:

*“The naive believes everything, But the sensible man considers his steps” (Proverbs 14:15 NASB)*

b. It means we are likely to be “carried about by every wind of doctrine” (Ephesians 4:14).

c. It means we could easily be led to a state where we have fallen from grace<sup>19</sup>. The Galatians believed those who taught them that they needed to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses. Paul says to them...

*“It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.” (Galatians 5:1-4 NASB)*

4. Someone may ask, “So, what do I believe that is error?”

a. My answer, “I don’t know”. But if you do not “test the spirits” and if you do not “search the Scriptures daily” then neither do you!

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<sup>19</sup> Grace comes through knowledge (2 Peter 1:2)

- b. Do not deceive yourself into thinking that what you believe is the truth because that is what the majority believe. Is the majority always right? Salvation by faith only is a belief held by the majority!

C. Why do we need to study?

1. Because those who teach us are not inspired (1 John 4:1).
2. Because what we believe and practice may be unscriptural (Matthew 22:29<sup>20</sup>).
3. Because otherwise we leave ourselves open to deceit (Ephesians 4:14).
4. Because what we believe and practice matters (John 8:24).
5. Because it is the only way to know the truth (John 17:17).
6. Because we are commanded to study (2 Peter 1:5; Ephesians 5:10; Colossians 1:9).
7. Because it is something we should desire to do (1 Peter 2:2; Psalms 19:10).
8. Because otherwise when we teach others...
  - a. Our teaching will be nothing more than parroting (1 Timothy 1:6-7).
  - b. We may be spreading error (1 Timothy 1:6-7; 2 Timothy 2:16-17).

### III. WHAT STUDY MEANS

A. Forms of study:

1. **Reading** is a form of studying by which we gain understanding (Ephesians 3:4).
2. **Meditating** is a form of studying by which we gain greater insight (Psalms 119:99).
3. **Searching** is a form of studying by which we piece together the truth on a particular subject (Acts 17:11; John 5:39; 1 Peter 1:10-11).

[Note: focusing exclusively on one form of studying (e.g., reading) is unwise. It is necessary to utilize all these forms of study to ensure understanding, insight, and learning.]

B. Evidence of studiousness<sup>21</sup>.

1. Belief can only come through the hearing of God's word (Romans 10:17; Luke 16:29-31). Those who doubt and question God's word are usually those who are *not* studying.
2. Growth and maturity in piety and godliness will only come through a continual feeding on God's word (1 Peter 2:2; 2 Timothy 3:15-16). The Lord expects us to move on from milk to meat! (1 Corinthians 3:2; Hebrews 5:13). Those who neglect to study will soon die.
3. Teaching others requires a certain degree of skill and knowledge. The studious will reach a point where they are able to teach (Hebrews 5:12).
4. Tools and notes.
  - a. Melvin says, "*I am a very enthusiastic gardener.*" Yet there are no tools in his shed and his hands are very clean, smooth, and soft! Do you believe him?
  - b. Myrtle says, "*I regularly study the Bible.*" Yet there are no study aids<sup>22</sup> on her bookshelf and her notebook lays on her desk unused! Do you believe her?

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<sup>20</sup> The Sadducees did not believe in a future resurrection. This was due to poor studying.

<sup>21</sup> The evidences below are not meant to be a comprehensive list.

<sup>22</sup> Pictorial Bible dictionary, concordance, Hebrew/Greek dictionary, etc.

## Conclusion

1. There are certain principles to which we all subscribe but this does not mean that teachers who subscribe to these principles cannot teach error. Preachers and teachers are fallible...only the Scriptures are infallible.
2. It is essential that all of us study the Scriptures for ourselves because this is the only way to know the truth and avoid being carried away by every wind of doctrine.
3. Bible study involves reading, meditating, and searching the Scriptures. It is essential to utilize all these forms of study to ensure understanding, insight, and learning.
4. Those who claim they study the Scriptures will bear the fruit that substantiates such a claim: faith, growth, development, and the tools of the trade.

If you really are studying then you do well.

If you are not studying then today is a good day to begin.

*“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” (2 Timothy 3:15-16 NASB)*

The following is an article I received from Whit Sasser recently.

In my decisions about what Bible studies to present, I try to be balanced. I like to consider both Old and New Testaments, positive and negative approaches, in depth and overview lessons, topical and expository classes, and basic and more complicated themes. Not everyone in the audience is at the same place spiritually and not all studies will hit spot on right where every person is spiritually every time, but overall I trust the sum total provides a good deal of edification.

We often need to be reminded of things previously learned, lest we let them slip, but growth in the knowledge of the will of God will only come with some challenges to our thinking. Just as it was in school, much of our learning has to initially pass through a phase where something is puzzling, before we finally come to grasp it. So see the challenges as friends, not foes.

Why do we need to study God's word so much? Here are some of the reasons why.

1. We need to study God's word regularly, so as to prevent us falling away.
2. Faithful attention to study of the Scriptures will be a good example to the weaker ones among us.
3. To offset the damaging affects of worldliness we need to keep our nose in the Book.
4. To defend ourselves against false teachings, we need to know the Bible.
5. In order to produce faith we need to hear God's word, for that is where faith comes from.
6. Studying the word of God often is necessary to bring about a transformation into a Christ-like individual. The Holy Spirit works through the word to accomplish this.
7. We tend to forget, so repetition is a must.
8. Bible learning helps assure us having God's approval.

So study the Bible regularly, listen to all the sermons, and attend Sunday morning and Wednesday night classes. Go to the special classes and lectureships conducted periodically throughout the year. Set up personal studies with the preacher, if you will, and by all means, read daily at home or work.



## AS A MAN THINKETH

*What You Sow You Shall Reap*

### Introduction

*“For as he thinks within himself, so he is....” (Proverbs 23:7 NASB)*

1. Contextually, the writer is warning against dining with a person who is known to be selfish. Their words may be courteous and polite but words can conceal what is truly in the heart.
2. *“For as a man thinks within himself, so he is.”* This principle is true of all people in every age.
  - a. The meaning is, the ethics, principles, and attitudes by which a man is governed are manifested in his lifestyle.
  - b. D. Collins says, *“The attitudes and thoughts are what determine a person’s behavior. It is also true that the way we behave reflects our thoughts. A man acts as he thinks and thinks as he acts” (Quotes & Things, Comments, D. Collins).*
  - c. Barnes says, *“He is not the man his mouth speaks or declares him to be, but what his heart thinks; which is discovered by his looks and actions, and by which he is to be judged of, and not by his words” (Barnes).*
  - d. James Allen says, *“A man is literally what he thinks, his character being the complete sum of all his thoughts” (As A Man Thinketh, James Allen).*
3. In this lesson, we shall answer the following questions...
  - a. What areas of our lives are affected by our thinking?
  - b. Do we still need to change our thinking now that we are Christians?
  - c. How can we find out what aspects of our thinking we need to change?

### I. YOU ARE WHAT YOU THINK!

#### A. What areas of our lives are affected by our thinking?

##### 1. Consider the following quotes:

*“...every act of man springs from the hidden seeds of thought, and could not have appeared without them. This applies equally to those acts called ‘spontaneous’ and ‘unpremeditated’ as to those which are deliberately executed” (As A Man Thinketh, James Allen).*

*“Every attitude, every word, and every deed is the result of the way we think” (Quotes & Things, Thoughts, D. Collins).*

*“For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.” (Matthew 15:19 NASB)*

*“As a man thinketh in his heart so he is, not only embraces the whole of a man’s being, but is so comprehensive as to reach out to every condition and circumstance of his life” (As A Man Thinketh, James Allen).*

2. It *essential* that we **understand** that, our achievements or failures, and the favorable or unfavorable circumstances that we find ourselves in are the result of our thinking<sup>23</sup>.

*“Every man is where he is by the law of his being. The thoughts that he has built into his character have brought him there, and in the arrangement of his life there is no element of chance, but all is the result of a law that cannot err” (As A Man Thinketh, James Allen).*

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<sup>23</sup> I have a limited number of James Allen’s booklet, “As A Man Thinketh” that explains this more fully.

B. So, what we think is what we are, and what we think and what we are can, to a large degree, be perceived in a number of ways:

1. By our words.
2. By our behavior. This includes...
  - a. The present circumstances in which we find ourselves (e.g., employment situation, living conditions).
  - b. Our likes and dislikes (e.g., colors, TV programs, the style of clothes we choose to wear).

Others are able to perceive our thoughts by what we say, do, like, wear, watch, go, etc. Every aspect of our speech and behavior reveals something about the way we think.

## II. CHANGE YOUR THINKING TO CHANGE YOUR LIFE

A. Can't change or won't change?

1. For those of us that are already Christians, a great change in our thinking has already taken place.
  - a. The gospel message convicts of sin and calls for *a change of mind* or repentance (Acts 2:38; 17:30).
  - b. The longer we have lived our lives governed by the principles of the world and according to the flesh, the greater the change. Consider, for example, Paul's words to the Corinthians:

*“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)*

2. So, if such great changes have already taken place, then any *further changes are possible*.

B. Do we need to change our thinking any more?

1. This depends on how we perceive conversion:
  - a. If baptism is viewed as a ‘finishing line’, then one might believe that there are no further changes in thinking necessary.
  - b. However, if we have a correct view of our conversion, which is just ‘the beginning of a new life’, then we understand that there is yet much work to be done.
2. The Scriptures teach that our conversion is the beginning of new life (Romans 6:4), that we are babes in Christ (John 3:3, 5; 1 Peter 1:3, 23), and that we need to grow and mature in our thinking and behavior (Ephesians 4:15; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18).

**Baptism is not a finishing line**



*“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 12:2 NASB)*

Baptism marks the beginning of a new life

*“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 4:22-24 NASB)*



3. Yes, we need to continue to grow, and this is achieved through a renewing of the mind. But in what areas do we do we need to change our thinking? (Psalms 19:12). There are three ways of finding out:

- a. As we devote ourselves to study and meditation, the word will reveal our strengths and shortcomings. The law of God defines sin and exposes the true sinfulness of sin (Romans 7:7, 13).
- b. The Lord's discipline reveals where we are strong and weak and may lead us to repent or change our thinking (Revelation 3:19).  
*"All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness" (Hebrews 12:11 NASB)*
- c. The concept of self-examination is clearly taught (1 Corinthians 11:28; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Galatians 6:4). Examining ourselves can lead to a change of thinking and result in a change of behavior.

### **Conclusion**

1. We are what we think, and what we think is reflected in every aspect of our lives.
2. Our thinking altered greatly when we believed the gospel, and our obedience, in baptism, reflected this change in our thinking.
3. But our conversion was only the beginning of a change of thinking that continues throughout our Christian life.
4. As we continue to study, learn from our trials, and examine ourselves, our thinking will be shaped and thus we become more Christ-like in our thinking, which is our goal.
5. We all need to understand that, "*As a man thinks in his heart, so he is,*" and then go on discover those areas of our thinking that need changing so that we become more like the person that God wants us to be.





## ASPECTS OF BECOMING BEHAVIOR

*“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks” (Ephesians 5:1-4 NASB)*

### Introduction

1. One of my parent's frequent admonitions was, *“Behave yourself.”* There were a variety of infractions and violations that provoked such an admonition: teasing my younger siblings, being silly, refusing to do chores, challenging direct commands (e.g., it's your bed time), etc.
2. The main objective of this lesson is to consider several aspects of what constitutes becoming behavior among Christians.

[Let us first note that...]

### I. WE ARE CALLED TO BE A HOLY PEOPLE

- A. We were **chosen** before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4; Cp. 2 Timothy 1:9).
- B. We were **called** through the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14).
- C. We were called **to be holy**:

*“But as He which hath called you is holy, so you also **be holy in all your behavior**” (1 Peter 1:15)*

*“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called” (Ephesians 4:1)*

*“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. But you did not learn Christ in this way” (Ephesians 4:17-20 NASB)*

[Now let us consider some of the...]

### II. ASPECTS OF BECOMING BEHAVIOR

#### A. Behavioral attributes:

##### 1. Good manners:

*“Turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume” (Luke 7:44-46 NASB)*

##### 2. Courteousness (1 Peter 3:8).

##### 3. Considerateness (Titus 3:2).

#### B. Careful speech:

##### 1. Abandon ALL inappropriate or unfitting speech:

*“But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks” (Ephesians 5:3-4 NASB)*

*“But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth” (Colossians 3:8 NASB)*

2. Speak that which edifies and imparts grace:

*“Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person” (Colossians 4:6 NASB)*

*“Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear” (Ephesians 4:29 NASB)*

C. Good works:

1. We were created in Christ Jesus for good works (Ephesians 2:10).
2. Good works are fitting for anyone who makes a claim to godliness (1 Timothy 2:10 > Titus 3:14).
3. We must ensure (find out) that the good works in which we engage are those prepared by God, and not those of our own devising (Ephesians 2:10; Colossians 3:17).

D. Manner of dress:

*“Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness” (1 Timothy 2:9-10 NASB)*

*“Your adornment must not be merely external--braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands” (1 Peter 3:3-5 NASB)*

**Conclusion**

1. In every age, throughout the world, God is known for His holiness, and each of us has been elected and called by this same God.
2. It follows, then, that we who are called by a holy God should also walk in holiness:

*“Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called” (Ephesians 4:1 NASB)*
3. The aspects of becoming behavior that we have examined are those which are sometimes lacking among the saints: **good manners, graceful speech, good works, and modest dress.**
4. Brethren, let us each stir up the determination of mind to abandon the influences of the world and grow in the knowledge of the principles of true religion.
5. Such growth will only come through perseverance in study and application of God’s word (Read 2 Peter 1:1-11).

# ASPECTS OF PERSECUTIONS AND TRIALS

## *The Church's Reaction To Adversity*

### Introduction

1. Since the establishment of the church, God's people have endured various persecutions and trials. Even in times of comparative rest a church may face discouraging trails from a variety of circumstances and sources.
2. It is such persecutions and trials that can either 'make or break' a church. It is my conviction that all such persecutions and trails are *permitted* by God for a purpose.
3. In this lesson, we shall consider the following points:
  - a. The Author Of Persecutions And Trials
  - b. The Purpose And Benefits Of Persecutions And Trails
  - c. Seven Assurances That Sustain Us In Times Of Persecutions And Trails
  - d. The Proper Response In The Face Of Persecutions And Trials

### I. THE AUTHOR OF PERSECUTIONS AND TRIALS

- A. The book of Revelation is a mystery to many, but it is necessary that we study chapter twelve if we are to understand the source of persecutions and trails that face the church.
  1. The spiritual remnant of God's people gave birth to the Messiah (Revelation 12:1-2, 5).
  2. Satan sought to kill the Child as soon as He was born (Revelation 12:4).
  3. The Child, however, was "*caught up to God and His throne*" (Revelation 12:5).
  4. Before continuing with the fortunes of the woman, the writer describes the spiritual warfare which has been going on from the beginning, but reaches its climax in Christ's victory over Satan (Revelation 12:7-12).
  5. Unable to defeat the Man Child, the Devil now persecutes the 'woman,' i.e., the church (Revelation 12:13).
  6. However, God protected the church from His onslaught (Revelation 12:14).
  7. Being frustrated yet again, the Devil turns and makes war on "*the rest of her offspring,*" i.e., the rest of the saints that keep the testimonies and commandments of God (Revelation 12:17).

*Satan is the source of all trials and persecutions*

- B. Satan, of course, is not seen in person persecuting individual members of the church! Let us consider the mediums and agencies through which Satan works:
  1. There are two basic mediums through which Satan seeks to destroy the church:
    - a. Worldliness: a broad term that covers all those things which are of the world and of the flesh. Some examples are: false religions and philosophies, materialism, and fornication.
    - b. Coercion: a term that covers threats, trials, and persecutions (both mental and physical).

*Worldliness and coercion are the mediums by which Satan seeks to destroy the church*

2. The agency by which Satan brings trails and persecutions on the church:
  - a. People of the world: these include atheists, agnostics, and adherents of false religions, and the organisations that they control.

- 1) Coercion: the following verse states what Satan is able to do, but it is equally clear that men are the instrumentality by which he would achieve it.

*“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; cp. 1 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5)*

- 2) Worldliness: The apostle Peter was not immune to the pressures of the world. In the company of worldly people he denied knowing Jesus three times:

*“Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew” (Matthew 26:69-74)*

- b. Believers: this includes both those who are sincere and insincere (cp. Philippians 1:18).

- 1) Worldliness: the following verses show how Satan uses believers to lure the church into sin (Note in particular the first passage where the cause of this sin is attributed to Satan):

*“But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God” (Acts 5:1-4)*

*“Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.” (Revelation 2:20)*

- 2) Coercion: the following verse shows how a believer can coerce the church:

*“I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church” (3 John 1:9-10)*

**Man is the agency that Satan uses to persecute and bring trial upon the church**

- C. Satan, then, is the author of all persecutions, trials, and temptations. Therefore, we ought not, under any circumstances, to ascribe their origin to God. It is true that God permits these things, but He is not the author:

*“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man” (James 1:13)*

*“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end” (Jeremiah 29:11)*

**God permits evil but He is not the author of evil**

## II. THE PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF PERSECUTIONS AND TRIALS

A. First, it should be noted that persecutions and trials are to be expected.

1. Jesus warns His disciples of persecutions:

*“Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.” (John 15:20)*

*“Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life” (Mark 10:28-30)*

2. Paul also warned of persecutions:

*“For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.” (1 Thessalonians 3:4)*

*“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:” (1 Peter 4:12)*

3. Why do the wicked persecute the righteous? The majority of mankind prefers to live in darkness or sin. Therefore, anything which is likely to expose their evil deeds will be hated: the light itself, those who walk in the light, or anything that represents that light.

*“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For **every one that doeth evil hateth the light**, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd” (John 3:19-20)*

*“Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? **Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.**” (1 John 3:12)*

*“Yea, and **all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.**” (2 Timothy 3:12)*

**All that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution**

B. Persecutions and trials are by no means pleasant but God allows them for several reasons:

1. To reveal certain things:

a. Persecutions reveal the true disciples of Christ:

*“Knowing this, that **the trying of your faith** worketh patience.” (James 1:3)*

*“And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended” (Mark 4:16-17)*

*“For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, **that they which are approved may be made manifest among you**” (1 Corinthians 11:18-19)*

1) James Coffman comments on this verse:

“Christians who become upset and discouraged because of schisms, factions and other disorders in the church make a tragic mistake. As God used Satan in the paradise of Eden to test the progenitors of the human race, he still tests the faith of all Christians. Church difficulties provide an opportunity for Christians to demonstrate that they are genuine followers of the Lord.”

b. The endurance of persecutions reveals that a future judgment is certain:

*“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: **Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God**, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer”* (2 Thessalonians 1:3-5)

*“Only let your conversation 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; And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: **which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God**”* (Philippians 1:27-28)

**Persecutions and trials reveal the true sons of God**

2. For those who are genuine disciples, it is an opportunity to develop their characters:

*“So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God **for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure**”* (2 Thessalonians 1:4)

*“Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. **But let patience have her perfect work**, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing”* (James 1:3-4)

**Persecutions and trials should be viewed as an opportunity to develop our characters**

3. To produce positive effects:

a. Persecutions and trials can stir up greater boldness, zeal, and determination:

1) We are all familiar with the account of the healing of the lame man at the gate Beautiful (Acts 3:1-10). Peter and John were arrested, threatened, and then released (Acts 4:1-3, 18, 21). They reported all these things to the brethren (Acts 4:23), but what effect did this have on the church?

*“And when they had **prayed**, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and **they spake the word of God with boldness**”* (Acts 4:31)

2) The brethren at Corinth were going through great trials: divisions, members vying for preeminence, complacency, etc. Because of these things, Paul wrote and rebuked them (1 Corinthians 1:11 > 3:1-3; 5:1-2; 6:1-5; 11:17-18). The response to his rebuke is recorded in his second letter:

*“For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that **ye sorrowed to repentance**: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, **what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge!** In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter”* (2 Corinthians 7:8-11)

3) Paul was bold to speak even in much conflict:

*“For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain: But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention”* (1 Thessalonians 2:1-2)

b. Persecutions and trials can bring us closer to God:

1) By giving us a greater assurance of God’s love:

*“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 8:35-39)

2) As we put a greater dependency on God:

*“But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me”* (2 Timothy 3:10-11)

c. Persecutions, trials, and all hardships will stir up compassion for others who suffer in the same way, and, therefore, we are able to comfort them:

*“Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”* (1 Peter 5:9)

*“And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation”* (2 Corinthians 1:6-7)

*“And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.”* (1 Corinthians 12:26)

4. To discipline the wayward:

a. Certain brethren were going astray but God allowed them to suffer as a disciplinary measure:

*“For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons” (Hebrews 12:3-8)*

1) This discipline itself produces fruits of righteousness:

*“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” (Hebrews 12:11)*

b. Ananias and Sapphira were punished when they lied to God (Acts 5:1-10). This also had a disciplinary effect on the church:

*“And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things” (Acts 5:11)*

1) This event would surely cause grave, self-examination, dread of hypocrisy, covetousness, and vain glory.

*Persecutions and trials have many beneficial effects*

### III. SEVEN ASSURANCES THAT SUSTAIN US IN TIMES OF PERSECUTIONS AND TRIALS

A. Many Christians have remained faithful to God even in the face the most severe persecutions and trials. What sustained them, how did they endure? Perhaps it was...

1. The assurance of an eternal reward:

*“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for **theirs is the kingdom of heaven**. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for **great is your reward in heaven**: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Matthew 5:10-12)*

*“But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, **knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance**” (Hebrews 10:32-34)*

*“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, **when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy**” (1 Peter 4:12-13)*

*“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, **he shall receive the crown of life**, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.” (James 1:12)*

*“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 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 12:1-2)*



*“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Romans 8:16-17)*

2. The assurance that God works all things together for our good:

*“Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he **for our profit**, that we might be partakers of his holiness” (Hebrews 12:9-10)*

*“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.” (Romans 8:28)*

3. The assurance that our persecutors will be repaid:

*“Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: **Who shall give account** to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead” (1 Peter 4:4-5)*

*“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, **Vengeance is mine; I will repay**, saith the Lord.” (Romans 12:19)*

*“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to **recompense tribulation to them that trouble you**” (2 Thessalonians 1:3-6)*

4. The assurance that we have been counted worthy:

*“So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be **counted worthy of the kingdom of God**, for which ye also suffer” (2 Thessalonians 1:4-5)*

a. Peter and John rejoiced that they had been counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ:

*“And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, **rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name**” (Acts 5:40-41)*

5. The assurance that Jesus also suffered:

*“For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.” (Hebrews 12:3)*

*“For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: 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 2:20-24)*

*“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” (1 Peter 4:1)*

6. The assurance that we are not the only ones suffering:

*“Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that **the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.** But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1 Peter 5:9-10)*

7. The assurance that nothing can separate us from the love of God:

*“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:35-39)*

*“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13)*

B. These seven assurances produce joy, under normal circumstances, which is heightened in times of persecution.

*God has given us many assurances that will sustain us in the face of persecutions and trials*

#### IV. THE PROPER RESPONSE IN THE FACE OF PERSECUTIONS AND TRIALS

A. The proper response to persecution.

1. The arrest of Peter and John (Acts 3:1-4:31).

a. The religious authorities commanded Peter and John not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:18). **Their response:**

*“But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19-20)*

1) After their release, Peter and John reported these things to the church (Acts 4:23). **Their response:**

a) They prayed for boldness to speak the word (4:24, 29).

b. Did this persecution hamper the work of the church? The following passage reveals the answer:

*“And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.” (Acts 4:31)*

2. Peter and John arrested again (Acts 5:12-42).

a. The council resounded their earlier warnings (5:27-28). Further threats were also accompanied by a beating (5:40). **Their responses:**

*“Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, **We ought to obey God rather than men.** The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him” (Acts 5:29-32)*

*“And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.” (Acts 5:41)*

- b. Did the council’s threats and the administration of physical pain affect their work? The following verse reveals the answer:

*“And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.” (Acts 5:42)*

3. The murder of Stephen and the great persecution against the church (Acts 7:54-60).

- a. As we consider Stephen’s character (Acts 6:5), his evangelistic activities (Acts 6:8), and the lamentation that was made over him (Acts 8:2), we realize that he was a prominent, key figure among the brethren.

- 1) This great and well loved man was murdered while yet preaching the gospel:

*“When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep” (Acts 7:54-60)*

- 2) The effects that Stephen’s death may have on the church are now compounded as the religious authorities turn on the whole church:

*“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” (Acts 8:1-3)*

- b. Surely the murder of such a prominent and key figure and a great persecution of the church would have disastrous effects? Surely the work would be severely hampered? Remarkably, No.

*“Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed” (Acts 8:4-7)*

B. The proper response to apostasy.

1. The Scriptures record the apostasy of three men, Judas (Matthew 26:47-49), Demas (2 Timothy 4:9-10), and John Mark (Acts 13:13).

a. Let us note the response to each of these cases:

1) Judas was a “*key player*,” one chosen by the Lord to be an apostle, a man of prominence among the brethren. You would think that the apostasy of a man in such a role would have a devastating effect on the brethren. **Their reaction:**

a) Peter addressed the disciples, related the events, and suggested, in accordance with the Scriptures, that Judas be replaced (Acts 1:15-22).

*“And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles” (Acts 1:23-26)*

2) Demas forsook Paul and the Lord because he loved the world (2 Timothy 4:9-10). **Paul’s reaction:**

a) Paul related this event to Timothy and asked him to send John Mark to help in the work:

*“Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.” (2 Timothy 4:11)*

3) John Mark, a companion of Paul, forsook the work and returned to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). There is no recorded reaction!

b. Did the apostasy of these ‘key players’ hinder the brethren or the work of the church in any way?

1) In reference to Judas: no, they all remained in Jerusalem waiting for the promise of the Holy Spirit and continued meeting together (Acts 2:1).

2) In reference to Demas: no, Paul’s intention was to continue in the work with John Mark. Note also that Paul is organizing:

*“Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry. And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus” (2 Timothy 4:11-12)*

3) In reference to John Mark: no, they merely split into two teams and continued in the work:

*“But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on. Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience” (Acts 13:14-16)*

C. The proper response to divisions.

1. Doctrinal crisis in Jerusalem.

a. Paul and Barnabas had been preaching salvation through faith in Christ but some were insisting that it was necessary for Gentile Christians to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses (Acts 15:1, 5). The whole church, at Jerusalem, came together to discuss this question (Acts 15:6).

b. How did this crisis affect the church? Were all the disciples thrown into despair? Was the work of the church hindered? The following verses reveal the answer:

*“So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle: Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation. And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them. And after they had tarried there a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles. Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still. Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also” (Acts 15:30-35)*

2. The seeds of denominationalism at Corinth.

- a. A party spirit had developed in the church at Corinth, small groups were forming and rallying around unnamed prominent speakers (1 Corinthians 1:10-13a; 4:6). There was a division that manifested itself during the Lord’s Supper between the rich and the poor (1 Corinthians 11:17-22).
- b. After reading Paul’s rebuke of this situation, did the church fall apart? I suppose it could have done if they had not adopted the proper attitude. Look at the response:

*“For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that **ye sorrowed to repentance**: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that **ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge!** In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter. Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you. Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all. For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth. And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him. I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all things” (2 Corinthians 7:8-16)*

D. The proper response to hypocrisy.

1. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11).

- a. Ananias and Sapphira had sold some property and put a part of the proceeds into the treasury for the care of needy saints. However, they claimed that they had given *all* the proceeds from the sale (5:1-2). Peter exposed their lie and the Lord struck them both down dead (5:1-10).
- b. Did such hypocrisy cause members of the church to fall away? Did this incident affect the work of the church?

1) One affect of this incident was fear:

*“And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things” (Acts 5:11)*

2) But no, the work of the church was not interrupted:

*“And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch” (Acts 5:12)*

2. Peter and Barnabas (Galatians 2:11-13).

- a. Peter and Barnabas were in Antioch and were quite happy to socialize with Gentile Christians. However, when certain Jewish brethren came down from Jerusalem, Peter and Barnabas, and other Jewish brethren, separated themselves from the Gentile brethren (2:11-13).
- b. We do not know what happened after this incident but it does not seem to have had any adverse effects on Paul (He continued preaching all his life). The fact that he mentions this incident in a letter to the Galatians presupposes that he expected no negative reaction on their part.

E. The proper response to partiality.

1. Hellenist widows neglected by Hebrews (Acts 6:1-7).

- a. This is a case of Christians showing partiality. It seems the Hebrew section of this Christian church were responsible for a daily distribution among needy widows. However, they were, deliberately it appears, neglecting the Hellenist widows (6:1).
- b. Such behavior among Christians seems shocking, how did the church react? Did members abandon the church in droves? No, they simply elected men suited to this responsibility (6:2-6). Was the work of the church hindered in any way? The following verses reveal the answer:

*“And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people” (Acts 6:7-8)*

F. The proper response to a Christian living a sinful life (The case we are about to consider deals specifically with immorality but the same response is to be expected regardless of the sin).

1. A member of the church at Corinth was fornicating with his step mother (1 Corinthians 5:1). The church knew about this and had done nothing (1 Corinthians 5:2).
2. How did the church react, was this an occasion for upset, anger, and apostasy? How did the church respond to the situation? The following passages from Paul’s second letter reveals their response:

*“But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all. Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him” (2 Corinthians 2:5-8)*

*“For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter. Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you. Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all. For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth. And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him. I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all things” (2 Corinthians 7:8-16)*

*Despite persecutions and trials we must continue in the work of the Lord*

**Conclusion**

1. Persecutions and trials are inevitable:
  - a. Those that are living godly in Christ Jesus will be called to suffer for the sake of righteousness.
  - b. Any church seeking to accomplish its divinely appointed work will have ‘internal’ problems with which to deal.
2. When persecutions and trials come, it is important that we remember that:
  - a. Satan, not God, is the author of all such evils.
  - b. Although unpleasant, they are serving the purposes of God and, that in fact, there are benefits to be derived from such.
  - c. God has given us several assurances that will sustain us through the most severe of persecutions and trials.
  - d. There is a proper and improper response to such. Regardless of persecutions and trials, we must remain faithful and press on with the work of the Lord. Those who let such things hinder the work or their own progress are really revealing their lack of commitment to the Lord. To fail is the equivalent of saying that we reject the purposes of God, there are no benefits of such, and the assurances are not good enough to sustain anyone.

*“For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)*





# ASPECTS OF PREACHING

*Essential if we are to reach our objective*

## Introduction

1. Christ gave *gifts* to men for a *purpose* and with an *objective* in mind:

*“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says, WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN. (Now this expression, He ascended, what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? 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” (Ephesians 4:7-12 NASB)*

- a. **The gifts** given to men are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.
- b. **The purpose** in the giving of these gifts is with a view to edifying the body of Christ.
- c. **The objective** to be achieved is complete spiritual maturity.

*“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 4:13 NASB)*

2. So, what *kind* of teaching and preaching is necessary to help us reach our objective (complete spiritual maturity)?

a. Preaching that some people like to hear:

- 1) Teaching that tickles the ears.
- 2) Teaching that is new or novel.
- 3) Teaching that only educates (i.e., is not practical).

b. Teaching of this sort will not help anyone reach the objective that God desires for us.

3. In this lesson, we shall be focusing on the instructions Paul gave to Timothy in connection with **the aim of preaching**, and also the **various aspects of teaching** that are essential to help us reach the objective we desire.

### About this lesson

This lesson will focus on the instructions Paul gave to Timothy, a young evangelist, in connection with the aim of preaching, and also the various aspects of teaching that are essential to help us reach complete spiritual maturity.

## I. THE PURPOSE OF PREACHING

A. To **produce love**:

*“But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1 Timothy 1:5 NASB)*

1. It must be a love that proceeds from a *pure heart*, a *clear conscience*, and a *sincere faith*. Think: what does Paul mean by a pure heart, a clear conscience, and a sincere faith?
2. If love does not proceed from these, then that love is not the love of God.

B. To **prevent apostasy**:

*“In reminding the brethren of these things, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following” (1 Timothy 4:6 NASB)*

1. The “things” to which he refers relate to the warning at the beginning of the chapter of an apostasy in the latter times (1 Timothy 4:1-3).
2. A constant reminder of these things would keep them on their guard and prevent them being deceived.

C. To **keep blameless**:

“Prescribe these things as well, so that they may be above reproach<sup>24</sup>” (1 Timothy 5:7 NASB)

1. The “things” to which he refers are concerning, rebuking persons of a different age and sex, and the maintenance of widows; and particularly that children provide for their parents when helpless; and that widows trust in God, and give themselves to prayer and supplication, and not live in sin (1 Timothy 5:1-6).
2. The idea is: if they obey these instructions concerning their conduct, then no one will be able to reprove or bring any charge against them. They will be above reproach and blameless.

**What preaching is all about**  
Preaching is all about helping people change their behaviour and life for the better.

## II. ASPECTS OF TEACHING

A. Paul’s instruction to the young evangelist, Timothy, is to...

1. Preach the word (2 Timothy 4:2a).

“The meaning of this is to proclaim the pure unadulterated word in its fullness, not adding or taking away from it. Paul himself said to the Ephesian elders, ‘I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God’ - Acts 20:27” (D. Collins, *Quotes and Things, Commentary*).

2. Preach with all authority (1 Timothy 4:11; cp. Titus 2:15).
3. Preach in season and out of season (2 Timothy 4:2b).
4. Preach the truth (2 Timothy 1:13; cp. 2 Timothy 4:3).

B. Timothy’s teaching was to include these aspects:

1. Exhortation (1 Timothy 4:13). To exhort<sup>25</sup> is to encourage for the purpose of strengthening and establishing in the faith.
2. Reproving (2 Timothy 4:2a). The idea is to convince of error, to show to be wrong (CWS) by argument and persuasion.
3. Rebuking (2 Timothy 4:2b). The idea is to strongly admonish, to censure; to warn a person to cease sinning and to resound the consequences if they persist. This is a strengthened form of reprove, but here no persuasion is necessary.

**Reaching the objective**  
Exhortation, reproof, and rebuke are necessary if we hope to reach our objective

## Conclusion

1. The objective of all edification is complete spiritual maturity. In order to help us achieve this objective:
  - a. Preachers and teachers must preach the truth, the whole counsel of God, and preach without fear in season and out of season.
  - b. Preachers and teachers must be prepared to exhort, reprove, and rebuke.

<sup>24</sup> Or blameless (KJV)

<sup>25</sup> Also includes the idea of comfort and consolation.

1) Exhort us to conduct our lives to the highest possible standards:

*“As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY” (1 Peter 1:14-16 NASB)*

*“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 NASB)*

*“Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48 NASB)*

2) Reprove us when we fall short of these standards.

3) Rebuke us when we blatantly sin.

2. The responsibility of us as the audience is to heed the word of God and make any necessary changes.



## BACK TO BASICS

### *The Lord's Church*

#### Introduction

*“Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you” (2 Peter 1:12 NASB)*

*“We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error” (1 John 4:6 NASB)*

1. Look in the phone directory or tour around town for a while, and take note of the number of different churches. If you are surprised by the number of different churches or religious organizations you find, you will be shocked to learn that there are actually over 1000 different denominations; each having its own creed, government, and form of worship, and their continues to grow each year.

**This current state of affairs is, to say the least, confusing.**

2. What about those who are seeking the truth, those who are asking, *“What must I do to be saved?”*, *“What church should I join”*, *“What am I supposed to believe?”*, *“How does God want me to worship Him?”*

**Where will such a person get the right answers?**

3. The aim of this lesson is to reassure members of the Lord’s church and be of assistance to those who are seeking the truth.

#### I. WHERE DO WE LOOK FOR THE TRUTH?

*“Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth” (John 17:17 NASB)*

*“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16 NASB)*

- A. Asking religious leaders to show you the truth will prove fruitless because their *“truth”* is their version of it contained in a creed book or church manual. Most members, of course, believe they are following the Bible and are unaware of the existence of the creed or church manual from which they are being taught.

**Many churchgoers are unaware that their church follows a creed book.**

- B. If anyone wants to know the truth, then he or she must go to the only source of truth – the Bible (John 17:17). The Bible is complete (Jude 1:3), inspired of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17), and contains all the teaching we need to live a life pleasing to God (2 Peter 1:3).

**The Bible is the only reliable source of truth.**

#### II. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

- A. What does the Bible say about the church?

1. It says that Jesus intended to establish only ONE church (Matthew 16:18).
2. It says that there *is* only ONE church or body (Ephesians 4:4).
3. It says that the church is continually growing (Acts 2:47).

- B. What does the Bible say I need to do to be saved?

1. It says you must HEAR the gospel (Romans 10:13-17).
2. It says you must BELIEVE the gospel (Acts 16:31).
3. It says you must REPENT of your sins (Acts 3:19; 17:30).

4. It says you must CONFESS that Jesus is Lord (Romans 10:9).
5. It says you must be BAPTISED for the remission of sins (Acts 2:37-38).

C. What does the Bible say about the organisation of a local church?

1. It speaks of qualified elders who oversee the congregation (1 Peter 5:1-2). These men must meet the qualifications given (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).
2. It speaks of deacons who serve under the elders (Philippians 1:1). These men too must meet the qualification given (1 Timothy 3:8-13).
3. It also speaks of evangelists and teachers (Ephesians 4:11).

D. What does the Bible say about worship?

1. It says that we must worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).
2. It says we must continue steadfastly in “*the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and breaking of bread (i.e., the Lord’s Supper), and prayers*” (Acts 2:42).
3. It says we must meet on the first day of the week (Sunday) to break bread (i.e., the Lord’s Supper or communion) (Acts 20:7).

**Conclusion**

1. There are many religious organizations with their own creeds, forms of worship, and plans of salvation. This is confusing for the seeker of truth.
2. Seekers of truth will go to the Bible – the only reliable source of truth.
3. The Bible teaches that Jesus established only **one** religious organization, **one** pattern of sound doctrine, **one** form of worship, and **one** plan of salvation.
4. You are urged to begin your search today to find the way.

## “BE YE DOERS OF THE WORD”

James 1:22

### Introduction

1. Many people are content to hear the word of God only.
2. But God has always expected His people to be hearers *and* doers of the word.

### I. PROMISES TO BE OBEDIENT

#### A. Israelites.

*“Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him” (Exodus 19:3-6).*

*“But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries. For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off” (Exodus 23:21-22).*

*“If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land. And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword. For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish my covenant with you. And ye shall eat old store, and bring forth the old because of the new. And I set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people. I am the Lord your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that ye should not be their bondmen; and I have broken the bands of your yoke, and made you go upright” (Leviticus 26:3-13).*

#### B. The Obedience of Abram.

1. When God first called Abram, He promised to make him into a great nation, to bless him and make his name great, to bless those who bless him and curse those who curse him, and that in him all families of the earth would be blessed, but *only if he obey the Lord*, which he did (Genesis 12:1-4). And we know that all of God's promises concerning him came true.
2. Abram offered his son as a sacrifice and received a blessing *because he obeyed God's voice* (Genesis 12:1-3; 22:11- 18; Cp. James 2:21-24).

### II. NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING

#### A. We must be doers of the word.

*“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed” (James 1:22-25).*

B. A person is wise if he obeys but a fool if he doesn't (Matthew 7:24-27).

*“Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell--and great was its fall” (Matthew 7:24-27)*

**Conclusion**

1. God has always expected obedience from those whom He would bless (Read Matthew 7:21).
2. Those who hear and do not obey are fools (Matthew 7:24-27).



## “BE YE THEREFORE PERFECT”

*Mathew 5:48*

### Introduction

1. An honest person, when asked, “*Are you perfect*”, will admit that they fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23) and confess that they will never be perfect in this life. This is because we normally associate the word *perfect* with being sinless.
2. So let us explore this word further and see if there is any sense in which we can be perfect.

### I. PERFECT KNOWLEDGE (1 Corinthians 13:8-12)

- A. Miracles were to cease (1 Corinthians 13:8).
- B. Their knowledge was partial (1 Corinthians 13:9).
- C. When that which is *perfect* (complete) is come, then that which *in part* (incomplete) shall be done away (1 Corinthians 13:10).
- D. Knowledge was *partial*, so that which is *perfect* (complete) is complete knowledge (James 1:25).
- E. The word *perfect*, as used in these verses, means **complete**.

### II. PERFECT LOVE (Matthew 5:43-48)

- A. Jesus said, “*Be ye perfect*”, but He is not saying *be sinless*. Jesus is saying, “*Be complete*” (Matthew 5:48, and the previous verses tell us in what way we are to be perfect (complete)).
- B. It was said, “*Love your neighbor and hate your enemy*” (Matthew 5:43), but this love is incomplete.
- C. God shows His perfect love, in that He makes the sun shine on the good and evil, as He does the rain (Matthew 5:45; Cp. John 3:16).
- D. If our love is to be *perfect* (complete) then we must love our neighbors *and* our enemies (Matthew 5:44; Cp. Romans 12:17-21).

### III. PERFECT UNDERSTANDING

- A. We are to grow in knowledge (2 Peter 3:18).
- B. Through knowledge, we become perfect (2 Timothy 3:16).
- C. God's word is perfect knowledge (James 1:25).

### Conclusion

1. We have seen that the word perfect means *complete*.
2. Armed with this knowledge, we are able to understand the command to be perfect. When we are exhorted to be perfect, a quick look at the context will describe in what we are to be perfect. In Matthew 5:48, the exhortation to be perfect is, from the context, to be perfect or complete in love.
3. Let us, then, be diligent in our study of God's word, that we may gain a perfect understanding of His will for us.



## BEST DEFENSE

### Introduction

1. So often, as I speak to different people about spiritual things, whether friends, relatives, or to strangers, it soon becomes clear that they are not interested in hearing the gospel.
2. Each person seems to have their own ready answer or defense, and the conversation seems to be nothing more than an exchange of opinions. Such talks usually end with them saying, *“Well, you’ve got your beliefs and I’ve got mine,”* as if one was as good as the other. I have usually come away feeling that I have made a hash of it.
3. I have since learnt that there are several different categories that people tend to fall into, and knowing this has helped me to properly assess people and decide in what direction to steer the conversation. It may not result in their conversation, but I come away knowing I have left them no choice but to admit the real reason for their unbelief.

### I. IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

#### A. Opinionated (but a believer in God). *“Behold, I thought.”*

1. Such people have a set of beliefs and moral values based on...
  - a. What the Bible teaches.
  - b. What the world teaches.
  - c. What is right in their own eyes.

*“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. (Isaiah 55:8)*

2. Self opinionated people usually begin a sentence with *“I”, “My”, “I think”, “In my opinion,”* and, *“I’ve come to the conclusion”*.
3. In Naaman's *opinion* Elijah should have come out to him and cured him of his leprosy, rather than telling him to dip in the Jordan (2 Kings 5:11; see also Judges 21:25).

#### B. Denial. *“You shall not...”*

1. There are those who just seem to deny anything that does not suit them - they deny the existence of God, they deny that Christ came in the flesh (2 John 7) and they deny that the Bible is the word of God.
  - a. They do not base their beliefs on inquiries that have been made or a careful examination of evidence.
  - b. Their beliefs are based on what seems to be easiest, whatever is the least demanding.
2. Watch out for phrases like, *“I just can't believe that”, “You can believe that if you want to”,* and *“I prefer to believe this.”*
3. Then, as now, there were those who made denials, though the evidence was before them.
  - a. *“He is like him,”* said some about the man born blind (John 9:9).
  - b. The Sadducees denied the resurrection and the existence of the human spirit (Acts 23:8).
  - c. The Pharisees denied that the works Jesus did were of God and attributed them to Satan (Matthew 12:22-24, 31-32).

*“Therefore I said unto you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins” (John 8:24).*

*“But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 10:33).*

C. Complacency. *“Take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.”*

1. Complacent people tend to avoid spiritual discussions and their thinking is confined only to their daily activities. They have an *“eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die”* view of life.
2. If you do bring up spiritual topics you may hear statements like, *“I’m not bothered”, “I’m not interested”,* and, *“You only live once.”*
3. Two examples of complacency:
  - a. Lot's sons-in-law (Genesis 19:14).
  - b. The complacent rich man (Luke 12:16-21).

*“And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all” (Luke 17:26-27).*

## II. BREAKING DOWN THE DEFENSES

A. Tell them their particular problem!

1. Jesus told the Sadducees their problem:

*“Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures” (Matthew 22:29).*

2. Peter told Simon the Sorcerer his problem:

*“...your heart is not right in the sight of God...for I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity” (Acts 8:18ff).*

3. The seven churches of Asia were told their problems (Revelation 2:4-5, 14-16, 20-22; 3:1).

B. Reason with them. *“Come now, and let us reason together” (Isaiah 1:18).*

1. To the man full of his own opinions, you might point out the need for a standard of absolute authority to which to appeal.
2. To the man who is in the habit of denying things, you might ask, *“Is it wise to accept something as true without some basis for that belief?”* No (Proverbs 14:15). So, won't a wise man be ready to give a defense for what he believes? Yes (1 Peter 3:15).
  - a. See how the blind man reasoned that Jesus was from God (John 9:29-24).
3. A man seems to be complacent when things are going well (Luke 12:16-19), but when things go wrong his mind will soon change (Luke 12:20; 16:23-24).

C. The Bible is the answer. *“Thy Word is a lamp unto My feet” (Psalms 119:105).*

1. Mr Opinionated. The Bible is the standard of truth and authority to which to appeal, opinions are cast aside (Psalms 18:30; John 17:17).
2. Mr Complacency. Point out scriptures that warn of the consequences of such an attitude (e.g., Luke 12:16-20).
3. Mr Denial. Present the Bible as God's word and have ready lessons on evidences that show the Bible to be inspired.

### III. SINCERE OR INSINCERE? *“That is the Judgment”*

- A. Having identified a person’s problem, torn down their defenses, and presented the Bible as having the answer, one of two responses is to be expected:
1. The person shows themselves to be sincere and is willing to study - great!
  2. The Bible may be challenged in the following ways:
    - a. Its inspiration may be challenged.
    - b. Some may doubt whether the Bible can be understood or interpreted correctly.
  3. Answering the challenges.
    - a. On point a., there may be many lessons on evidences that show the Bible to be the inspired word of God.
    - b. On point b., all worldly people seem to think that it’s different interpretations that have resulted in all the religious confusion today, but this is not true and we must be prepared to show this.
    - c. It is usually at the point of offering a study that people show themselves to be insincere and make their excuses to you.

#### **Conclusion**

1. Do not come away from a conversation feeling like you have made a mess of it! Identify the category the person falls into, tell them their problem, reason with them, and then present the Bible as having the answer.
2. An attack may be made on the Bible’s divine origin, so let them know evidences are available. If a person is unwilling to study and makes excuses, then you can be sure that such a person is insincere and not seeking after truth.
3. When you come away from such a conversation you will feel that you have done your best, even though you may not have converted them.
4. When you speak to that person again, if they come back, they will not be able to use the same argument again; not with you anyhow.
5. Remember, it is you that has the truth, i.e., Gods' word. It is they who refuse to repent. Being opinionated, complacent or just offering denials is their only and best defense.



# BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

## Introduction

1. It is important, as Christians, that we understand what the Bible means to us. It is equally important that we understand what the Bible is to those with whom we are speaking.
2. This lesson will show that, without a final authority to which to appeal, all discussions are going to be fruitless, and that this final authority must be the Bible.

## I. A NEW COVENANT

- A. The old law contains the promise of a *new* covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34).
- B. The covenant we are living under today is a fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy (Jeremiah 31:31-34).
- C. The old Law has now been done away (Romans 6:14; Galatians 2:16-17).

## II. THE NEW TESTAMENT IS COMPLETE

- A. The apostles were to be guided into all truth (John 16:13).
- B. The faith has now been once delivered (Jude 1:3; 2 Peter 1:2-3).
- C. We must not add or take away from God's word (Revelation 22:18-19).

## III. DO WE NEED AUTHORITY?

- A. There are warnings throughout the Bible not to add or take away from its content (Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6; 2 John 9:10).
- B. We must do all things by Jesus' authority (Colossians 3:17).
- C. Whatever is not of faith is sin (Romans 14:23).

## IV. TEACHING OTHERS SIMPLY

- A. Some say, "*If something is not condemned, then I can do it.*" Is this right?
- B. Others say, "*If I don't have a scripture for it, then I won't do it.*" Is this right?
- C. Whatever someone might teach, we are instructed to "*test the spirits*" (1 John 4:1), and we do this by searching the Scriptures for authority (Acts 17:11; Colossians 3:17).

## Conclusion

1. As Christians, it is important that we have authority for whatever we do. If we do not, then it will only result in many false teachings and many different groups, even as we see existing all around us.
2. As we teach others, let us do so in a simple manner, appealing always to the Scriptures.





## “BLESSED ARE THEY...”

Matthew 5:3-9

### Introduction

1. This lesson will take a look at the beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-9.
2. Our aim is to define each one in turn.

### I. BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT

- A. This is to be humble in the sight of God (Luke 18:9-14).
- B. We should recognize our unworthiness (Luke 17:10).
- C. The opposite of poor in spirit is pride (1 Peter 5:5-6).
- D. The poor in spirit have cause to rejoice as they shall enter the kingdom of God and enjoy all the blessings therein (Matthew 5:3).

### II. BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN

- A. This is mourning over sin (Psalms.38:1-9).
- B. Not a worldly sorrow, as with Judas (Matthew 27:3-5).
- C. A Godly sorrow that leads to repentance (2 Corinthians.7:8-10).
- D. Those who mourn for sin will rejoice, for in the kingdom of God, sin and guilt are washed away (Acts 2:38).

### III. BLESSED ARE THE MEEK

- A. Meek is often defined as weak, wimpish, fearful, shy etc.
- B. Moses was the meekest man on earth (Numbers 12:3): mention things done and said in his life for God.
- C. The same qualities that Moses possessed ought to be part of our makeup as well - Strength, courage, boldness, able to rebuke - (Titus 3:2).
- D. The meek shall *inherit the earth*. The expression was proverbial and simply meant to receive a great blessing (Psalms.37:20-22; Isaiah 60:21).
- E. In God's kingdom we are promised the basics to sustain our physical and emotional needs (Matthew 6:25-34). We also have all spiritual blessings in Christ (Ephesians 1:3; cp. Ephesians 1:11).

### IV. BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH DO HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS

- A. Jesus knew what it meant to hunger (Matthew 4:1-2), and thirst (John 19:28).
- B. We are to have this *strong desire* for righteousness (Matthew 5:6).
- D. The righteousness of man can never remove guilt, but the righteousness of God does (Romans 10:1-10; 1 Peter 3:21; thus the soul is filled).

### V. BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL

- A. Mercy is “*the outward manifestation of an inward feeling of pity and compassion*” (Vine’s).
- B. God showed His mercy toward us, for while we were still sinners Christ came and died for us (Romans 5:6-8).
- C. The mercy we show, we shall reap (Matthew 18:23-35; Psalms.18:25).

## **VI. BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART**

- A. To have all motives and thoughts in subjection to Jesus (2 Corinthians 10:5).
- B. Our hearts are purified by obeying the truth (1 Peter 1:22).
- C. One day we shall see God (Psalms.17:15).

## **VII. BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS**

- A. Not a worldly peace (John 14:27).
- B. The peace spoken of here is the peace between God and man which comes through Jesus (Ephesians 2:12-17).
- C. Thus, when we preach the gospel, we preach peace (Romans 10:15).

### **Conclusion**

1. Those who desire to enter the kingdom of God and remain in it must have these attitudes: humbleness, sorrow for sin, strength and courage, a strong desire for God's righteousness, mercy, a pure heart, and sharing with others the good news.
2. These are the characteristics of a true Christian.

## BLESSED ASSURANCE

### Introduction

1. When you purchase something from a store, you will always find a guarantee attached. This means that, should the appliance develop a fault, it will be repaired or replaced by the company. When you buy a car, you will usually get a warranty on all the parts, and should a failure occur, it will be replaced. An insurance policy offers protection against such things as death, loss, and damage of property.
2. Such policies give us assurance and peace of mind. It seems we all need assurances and guarantees! In the Bible, God has assured us that “*all have sinned*”. It further assures us that death and judgment will come to every man (Hebrews 9:27). But the Christian has no fear of death and the judgment (1 Corinthians 15:50-57; Hebrews 2:14-15), because the scriptures assure us that all who believe on Jesus have passed from death to life (John 5:24), and that all who are in Christ are no longer under condemnation (Romans 8:1). These are some assurances we find in the Bible, but do we have a guarantee that we are saved?

### I. HOW DO YOU FEEL?

- A. Do you feel safe and secure now that you are a Christian? It is all too easy to *feel* saved, but we must realize the possibility of apostasy. Some verses do speak of our security (e.g., John 10:27-29; Romans 8:38-39; Ephesians 2:8-10), but others speak of the conditional nature of salvation (Philippians 2:12; 1 Timothy 1:18-20; Galatians 5:1-5; read 1 Corinthians 10:11-12).
- B. Do you feel saved because you *know the Lord*? One might well quote from Jeremiah 31:31-34, but knowing the Lord is not based on our feelings but on our obedience (1 John 2:3-4).
- C. Can we claim to be saved because of some religious experience? Some people may experience great joy when they believe themselves to be saved (The Ethiopian eunuch experienced great joy Acts 8:39). But such feelings ought not to become the final authority regarding our salvation – what the Scriptures teach is what matters (Colossians 3:17; 2 Timothy 3:16).

### II. MY WAY

- A. “*If I keep God's law perfectly, then He will save me*”. Some were teaching this in the first century (Acts 15:1). However, Paul teaches us that obtaining righteousness by the Law cannot be done (Galatians 2:15-16; Romans 3:28; Galatians 2:21. [Not saved by works of the law]).
- B. “*If I do penance God will forgive me*” (Erroneous proof text 1 Corinthians 9:27). However, Jesus Himself suffered for our sins (Galatians 1:4). We have been made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Hebrews 10:10). Jesus is the atoning sacrifice for our sin (1 John 2:1-2). [The price has been paid in full by Jesus].
- C. “*I will make up for all the wrong I have done by filling my life with good deeds*”. As already pointed out, we cannot guarantee our salvation by works of the Law, neither will works of our own assure our salvation (Cp. 1 Corinthians 13:13). If the motive is to save ourselves, then good works count for nothing. Good works are not a means to salvation but rather good works demonstrate the faith we have (James 2:18).

### III. DO NOT WORRY!

- A. “*You never were lost, there is no such thing as sin*”. This, of course, is to call God a liar (1 John 1:10) and we deceive ourselves (1 John 1:8). Paul warns:
 

*“Be not deceived no sinner shall enter the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9).*
- B. “*We will all be saved in the end*” (Erroneous proof text Romans 5:18). Such a belief makes nonsense of many verses, (e.g., Mark 16:16; Matthew 25:31-34, 41).

- C. *“There is no hell”*. No doubt, such a doctrine will bring peace of mind to many. This may also be the salvation many are looking for! They are guaranteed no punishment for their sin! However, God does have the power to cast both body and soul into hell (Luke 12:4-5), which is a place of torment (Luke 16:23-28).

#### **IV. WITNESSES OF OUR SALVATION (Passover Comparisons)**

- A. God's word assured them of salvation (Exodus 12:12-13). Likewise, the New Testament tells us what to do to be saved (Acts 16:31) and God's word is truth (John 17:17). We must believe it.
- B. The blood of the Lamb was to be a sign (Exodus 12:13), and the blood of Jesus is a sign that we will not be destroyed (Cp. 1 John 1:7).
- C. They demonstrated their faith by obedience (Exodus 12:21-23, 28). So must our faith be a living faith (James 2:17-18).
- D. As Christians we also have the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13b-14).

#### **V. HOW DO I KNOW IF THE SPIRIT IS DWELLING IN ME?**

- A. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ in them does not belong to Christ (Romans 8:9).
- B. *“Are you dead to sin”*? Being dead to sin is evidence that the Spirit dwells in us (Romans 8:5-17; Cp. 1 John 3:9-10). There will be a struggle with sin (Romans 7:7-25).
- C. *“Are you being led by the Spirit”*? We must have our minds set on what the Spirit desires (Romans 8:5), the Spirit's desires can be known through the scriptures (Scriptures given to us by the Holy Spirit - 2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16), the scriptures lead and guide us - Psalms 119:133). If we are following God's word, then we are being led by the Spirit.
- D. *“Are you bearing the fruit of the Spirit”*? (Read Galatians 5:22-23).

#### **Conclusion**

1. We should not gauge whether we are saved based on our feelings, but, rather, upon what is taught in the word of God. In all matters pertaining to religion, the word of God should be our guide.
2. One of the great teachings of the Bible is salvation by God's grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8). This is a lesson we need to learn ourselves as well as preach to others. If as Christians we begin to think salvation is something to be earned, then we are fallen from grace (Galatians 5:4).
3. How can you know that you are saved? You can know if you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you (Romans 6:17). You were slaves to sin but are now led by the Spirit (Romans 8:14). You have your minds set on what the Spirit desires (Romans 8:5) and allowing ourselves to be guided by the word (Psalms 119:105) He has given us (1 Corinthians 2:10-13). If God's Spirit dwells within us, then love, peace, joy, patience, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, self-control, and gentleness will be characteristics of our way of life (Galatians 5:22-23).

*“Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from Him anything we ask, because we obey His commands and do what pleases Him. And this is His command: to believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as He commanded us. Those who obey His commands live in Him and He in them. And this is how we know that He lives in us: We know it by the Spirit He gave us. And now, dear children, continue in Him, so that when He appears we may be confident and unashamed before Him at His coming” (1 John 3:21-24 > 2:28).*

## BORN OF WATER AND THE SPIRIT

### Introduction

1. In this lesson we shall consider the concept of the new birth. We shall also be asking why the new birth is essential and examine birth by water and birth by the Spirit.
2. Is the new birth something we wait for or is it something we do?

### I. CLEANSING AND RENEWAL IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

- A. The concept of cleansing through by water is not new.
  1. Purification and cleansing by water (Numbers 8:5-7; Ezekiel 36:25).
  2. David speaks of being cleansed and washed (Psalms 51:2, 7).
- B. A renewed mind has always been required.
  1. God would give a new heart and a new spirit (Ezekiel 36:26).
  2. People were exhorted to get a new heart and spirit (Ezekiel 18:30-31; cp. Psalms 51:10-12).

### II. JESUS AND THE NEW BIRTH

- A. Jesus taught the new birth is essential to see the kingdom of God (John 3:3).
  1. Jesus said His kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36).
  2. He said the kingdom would come without observation (Luke 17:20-21).
  3. The kingdom came upon people (Matthew 12:28; cp. 1 Corinthians 2:14-15).
  4. The kingdom was established, as Isaiah and Daniel predicted (Isaiah 2:1-3; Daniel 2:44), around A.D. 33 on the Jewish feast day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-47). The kingdom is spoken of in the present tense after Acts 2 (Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:9).
- B. Jesus taught the new birth is essential to enter the kingdom (John 3:5).
  1. "*Born of water*" refers to baptism (an immersion in water).

“By ‘water,’ here, is evidently signified ‘baptism.’ Thus the word is used in Eph\_5:26; Tit\_3:5. Baptism was practiced by the Jews in receiving a Gentile as a proselyte. It was practiced by John among the Jews; and Jesus here says that it is an ordinance of his religion, and the sign and seal of the renewing influences of his Spirit. So he said Mar\_16:16, ‘He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.’ It is clear from these places, and from the example of the apostles Act\_2:38, Act\_2:41; Act\_8:12-13, Act\_8:36, Act\_8:38; Act\_9:18; Act\_10:47-48; Act\_16:15, Act\_16:33; Act\_18:8; Act\_22:16; Gal\_3:27, that they considered this ordinance as binding on all who professed to love the Lord Jesus” (Barnes).
  2. "*And the Spirit*" refers to the influences of the Holy Spirit.

“But, lest Nicodemus should suppose that this was all that was meant, he added that it was necessary that he should ‘be born of the Spirit’ also. This was predicted of the Saviour, that he should ‘baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire,’ Mat\_3:11. By this is clearly intended that the heart must be changed by the agency of the Holy Spirit; that the love of sin must be abandoned; that man must repent of crime and turn to God; that he must renounce all his evil propensities, and give himself to a life of prayer and holiness, of meekness, purity, and benevolence. This great change is in the Scripture ascribed uniformly to the Holy Spirit, Tit\_3:5; 1Th\_1:6; Rom\_5:5; 1Pe\_1:22” (Barnes).

### III. RENEWING THROUGH BAPTISM

#### A. It is a cleansing.

1. Immersed in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).
2. Some had been sinners but were washed (1 Corinthians 6:11).
3. Paul had his sins washed away through water (Acts 22:16).

#### B. A newness of life.

1. It is a washing of rebirth (Titus 3:5).
2. We were baptized into death and raised to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3-4).
3. Hence, born of water (John 3:5).

#### C. Added to the kingdom.

1. Added to [entered] the church [kingdom] (Acts 2:41, 47).
2. Entry into body by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13).

### IV. THE SPIRIT GIVES LIFE

#### A. Born through the word.

1. We are renewed by or through the Spirit (Titus 3:5).
2. The Spirit has given us the word (1 Corinthians 2:6-13).
3. Through the word we are born again (1 Peter 1:22-23; James 1:18).

#### B. Life by the Spirit through the Word

1. New self being renewed in knowledge (Colossians 3:10).
2. Made new in the attitude of your minds (Ephesians 4:22-24).
3. Transformed by the renewing of the mind (Romans 12:2) (i.e., The mind controlled by the Spirit - Romans 8:6).

### Conclusion

1. If a person is to enter the kingdom of God, then it is essential to be born again. Through the word of God, given by the Holy Spirit, our minds are renewed, and through the waters of baptism we die to sin and are raised to walk in newness of life.
2. The new birth is not something we wait for or something we do, it is a transformation that takes place after hearing and obeying the gospel - such is its power.
3. By this new birth we have put on Christ and so are called Christians. It is, then, impossible for a Christian to be born again since it is by being born again that a person becomes a Christian in the first place!
4. Have you been born again? I am not asking if you were baptized. But have you been born of water and the Spirit? How can you tell?

*“Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother” (1 John 3:7-10).*

## BUILDING JERUSALEM'S WALLS

### Introduction

1. Between the years 597-587 BC, the Jews were taken into captivity by the Babylonians. Later, when the time came for them to return to their home land, God raised up Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem. News came to Nehemiah concerning the condition of Jerusalem's walls and gates, and, having obtained authority from the king, he journeyed to Jerusalem with the intention of restoring the city to its former glory.
2. In this lesson, we shall make some spiritual and practical applications to the following points:
  - a. Before the work began, an examination of the walls was made (Nehemiah 2:11-13).
  - b. There was a willingness and mind to begin and do the work (Nehemiah 2:18b; 4:6).
  - c. The work was done by permission of the king (Nehemiah 2:1-5).

### I. EXAMINING THE WALLS (1 Peter 2:5 > 2 Corinthians 13:5)

Christians are the bricks that make up the building – the church – that are bound together by love.

#### A. Examining our attitude towards our brethren.

1. Regard each one better than ourselves (Philippians 2:3).
2. A willingness to serve our brethren (Matthew 20:27-28).
3. A willingness to die for our brother (John 15:12-13).
4. What is our view of the seemingly insignificant parts of the body (1 Corinthians 12:20-23)?

#### B. Examining our feelings for our brethren.

1. We are to greet one another (Romans 16:16a), but it must be a genuine greeting (1 Peter 5:14).
2. Our love for each other must be genuine (1 Peter 1:22; Romans 12:10).
3. We ought to feel good about meeting together (Acts 2:46; cp. Hebrews 3:13).
4. Or do we have more important things to worry about? Cares of the world (Matthew 13:22), bigger barns to build (Luke 12:18), or maybe we just love this world (2 Timothy 4:10).
5. How do you feel about showing hospitality?
  - a. Do you love showing hospitality (Titus 1:8)?
  - b. Do you pursue hospitality (Romans 12:13)?
  - c. Do you grumble when you do show hospitality (1 Peter 4:9)?

#### C. Examining our behavior towards one another.

1. Are we considerate towards one another (1 Timothy 5:1-2; 1 Peter 3:8; 1 Corinthians 13:5)?
2. Are we caring?
  - a. Bearing one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2).
  - b. Compassionate (1 Peter 3:8).
  - c. Rejoicing and mourning together (1 Corinthians 12:26).
3. Are we providing one another's needs (James 2:15; Matthew 25:34-40)?
4. It is our attitudes, feelings, and behavior towards one another, and the faith that we share, that binds us together, even as cement binds bricks together, and that is what we are.

## II. A MIND TO WORK

If the church is to fulfill its mission, then the people must have a mind to work.

### A. Three churches with a mind to work.

1. The church in Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 1:6-8).
2. The church in Philippi (Philippians 4:15-16).
3. The church in Corinth (2 Corinthians 9:1-2. [The Corinthians zeal provoked others]).

### B. Some have little or no desire to work.

1. The church in Laodicea needed to repent (Revelation 3:14-19).
2. Some people are too proud to work (Nehemiah 3:5).
3. Some needed teaching all over again (Hebrews 5:12).
4. Do you know why Jesus gave His life for us? One reason was that we might be a people zealous of good works for Him (Titus 2:14).

## III. DO ONLY THE WORKS THAT HAVE BEEN PREPARED FOR US

We must be careful to do the works that God has prepared and not invent our own – it's the Lord's church, not ours!

- A. We are created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which have been *prepared* for us to do (Ephesians 2:10).
- B. Whatever we do must be done by faith (Romans 14:23b > Romans 10:17), we must have the Lord's authority (Colossians 3:17) from the scriptures, which will furnish us unto good works (2 Timothy 3:15-16).
- C. Some will be rejected because their works were not by Jesus' authority (Matthew 7:22-23).

## IV. SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

The Lord has given everyone a talent that must be used for the good of the body.

- A. The body is made up of many members (Romans 12:4).
- B. It is God who placed the members in the body as He pleased (1 Corinthians 12:18).
- C. Each member of the body has a useful function (Romans 12:4-8).
- D. We must each realize our talents and use them to the full or suffer the consequences (Matthew 25:14-30).

## Conclusion

1. We are all bricks in God's spiritual house, bonded together by love and a common faith. This being true, we are ready, willing, and able to do the work that the Lord has given us to do.

*“Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12:9-18)*

2. Without cement the wall will collapse!



## BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

*“If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand” (Mark 3:25 NASB)*

### Introduction

1. Imagine a large family living together in a house. Now imagine what it would be like if only a few members had a close relationship while the rest just didn't get along; there would be jealousy, backbiting, slander, rivalries and all other undesirable things. Looking in from the outside, you might see an apparently happy family all working together, but a closer look would reveal the divisions, the tensions, and the animosity between the family members.
2. As Christians, we are all brothers and sisters in Christ and it is essential that we, as God's household, ensure that we build relationships with one another that are cemented together with love. Why is it essential? As Jesus said, *“If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand”* (Mark 3:25).

### I. LOVE ONE ANOTHER

- A. What is love for God? *“This is love for God: to obey His commands”* (1 John 5:3).
- B. Jesus said, *“If anyone loves Me, he will obey My teaching”* (John 14:23).
- C. What is Jesus' command? To love one another (John 15:12-14).

### II. YOU CANNOT HAVE ONE WITHOUT THE OTHER

- A. God expects us to love perfectly, as He does (Matthew 5:43-48).
- B. We cannot claim to love God and yet hate our brother (1 John 4:20-21).
- C. Love demands that we forgive and show mercy toward one another: God's forgiveness of our sins is conditional upon forgiving those who sin against us (Matthew 6:14-15), and His mercy toward us is conditional upon our mercy toward others (Matthew 18:21-35).

### III. DID THE EARLY DISCIPLES LOVE ONE ANOTHER?

- A. They devoted themselves to fellowship (Acts 2:42).
- B. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts (Acts 2:46).
- C. They supplied each others needs (Acts 2:45; 4:32).
- D. Paul had a relationship with the saints at Philippi (Philippians 1:3-11).
- E. Epaphroditus was a beloved brother (Philippians 2:25-28).

### IV. RELATIONSHIPS BUILT ON A COMMON FAITH

- A. We have all experienced a common birth (John 3:5; Titus 3:5; 1 Corinthians 12:13).
- B. We are all engaged in the same war against spiritual forces (Ephesians 6:12).
- C. We all have a common suffering (1 Peter 5:9).
- D. We all have the same hope – our resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20-22) and eternal life (1 John 5:11-13).

### V. RELATIONSHIPS MUST BE BUILT

- A. Develop the right attitude towards brethren.
  1. The same price was paid for each one of us - Jesus' precious blood, which makes us all equal (1 Corinthians 6:20 > 1 Peter 1:18-19).
  2. We must consider others better than ourselves (Philippians 2:3; 1 Peter 5:5).
  3. Any gifts we may have are to be used for the common good (1 Peter 4:10; 1 Corinthians 12:4-7).

**B. Put In The Effort.**

1. Greeting with genuine affection (Romans 16:16 > 1 Peter 5:14).
2. Show hospitality (1 Peter 4:9).
3. Maintain these relationships.

**Conclusion**

1. The relationships we have with each other in many ways reflect the relationships we have with God. For if we love our brethren as we ought, then we know that we love God. But if we hate anyone, we cannot love God, regardless of the claims we make (1 John 4:19-21).
2. Let us make every effort to build up new relationships this coming year and strengthen existing ones.

*“Make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to your goodness, knowledge; and to your knowledge, self-control; and to self-control perseverance, and to perseverance godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is short sighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins” (2 Peter 1:5-9).*

## CALVINISM REFUTED, COMMITMENT DEMANDED

*“And He was saying to them all, If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me” (Luke 9:23 NASB)*

### Introduction

1. Looking at the list of armourment in Ephesians 6:10-17, we notice that every piece, except the sword, is worn to protect a part of the body. I believe, then, that every Christian should acquaint themselves with any doctrine that may pose a threat to his faith or the faith of the brethren.
2. The doctrines of Calvinism are such doctrines that threaten the faith of every individual and encourage complacency, procrastination, languidness, and give a false sense of security.
3. In this lesson, we will show how our text refutes the doctrines of Calvinism; which have such a negative effect on a person’s faith and commitment.
4. For those unfamiliar with the doctrines of Calvinism, the doctrines are outlined below:

Total depravity	All men are born sinners and condemned. Therefore man is unable to make a decision for Christ, being dead in sin.
Unconditional Election	Since all men are dead in sin, all would be lost but God, but in His mercy, He chose certain individuals to be saved before the foundation of the world; these being chosen at random.
Limited atonement	Since God has chosen only a few to be saved, and only they can be saved, then it was only necessary for Christ to die for them. Christ died for the elect only.
Irresistible grace	To ensure that the chosen are saved, God sends His Holy Spirit to convert them. The Spirit operates on their heart in such a way that they cannot resist.
Perseverance of the saints	If God has chosen certain individuals to be saved, can they be lost? Of course not! This means that once conversion has taken place, apostasy is impossible.

### I. THE EFFECT OF CALVINISM ON FAITH AND COMMITMENT

#### A. Total depravity.

1. Total depravity refuted.
  - a. *“If anyone”*, *“Let him”*, *“Take up”*. Such terms indicate *free will*.
  - b. *“If anyone desires”*. This shows that the *desire* or *will* of man is involved in coming to Christ. The Father draws us to Christ but man must come to Him. The onus to come is on man.
2. Effects of this doctrine of faith.
  - a. Prospects feel no onus on their part to respond to the gospel, since they are waiting for God to convert them.
  - b. Those who are Christians may begin to question their salvation, which may in turn affect their commitment.
3. While it is true that we are *“dead in trespasses and sins”* (Ephesians 2:1), we are still able to choose or make a decision for Christ.

*“Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served...or the gods of the Amorites. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”* (Joshua 24:15).

#### B. Unconditional election.

1. Unconditional election refuted.

- a. *"If anyone desires to come to Me"*. The word *anyone* means just that - anyone! So, rather than being restrictive, it is all embracing.
- b. *"If anyone desires to come to Me"*. Whether we come to Christ or not depends on our *desire* or *will*.
- c. *"Let him deny himself"*. This shows the conditional nature of being a follower.

2. Effects of this doctrine on faith.

- a. Christians have an assurance that they are saved, and this assurance is determined by applying certain objective and subjective tests.
- b. Belief in the doctrine of unconditional election renders all objective tests meaningless and relies solely on subjective tests.
- c. Since our feelings are constantly changing, we may experience feelings of doubt concerning our election, which feelings are an unreliable measure of election.
- d. Filled with such doubts and having no objective measure, our commitment to Christ will suffer.

3. It is true that we are *"a chosen generation"* (1 Peter 2:9) but it is *in Him* that we are chosen (Ephesians 1:4). The Bible makes it clear that in order to be a chosen vessel we must *will it*. Paul puts it this way, *"Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honour, sanctified and useful for the master, prepared for every good work"* (2 Timothy 2:21). How do we place ourselves *in Him*?

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

C. Limited atonement.

1. Limited atonement refuted.

- a. *"If **anyone** desires to come after Me"*. The word *anyone* is all embracing rather than limited (Cp. 1 Timothy 2:4).
- b. *"If anyone **desires** to come after Me"*. Though the invitation is extended to all, one must desire to come.

2. Effects of this doctrine of faith.

- a. Same as B.

3. Jesus shed His blood on the cross for *all* men but that blood is only effectual for those who exercise faith in Him. Paul says it like this,

*"...Because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those who believe" (1 Timothy 4:10).*

D. Irresistible grace.

1. Irresistible grace refuted.

- a. *"If anyone desires to come after Me"*. The onus to come has clearly been put on man (Cp. Acts 13:42-46).

2. Effects of this doctrine on faith.

- a. Those who feel that the Holy Spirit has operated on their heart in a special way may feel saved, but such feelings are deceptive taking precedence over the Bible.
- b. What of those who have not experienced this special operation of the Spirit upon their hearts? Such a person may feel rejected and become depressed. This can only weaken a person's faith.

3. Consider this statement by Paul to the Jews:

*“It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles” (Acts 13:46).*

Clearly, then, it is impossible to reject the grace of God.

E. Perseverance of the saints.

1. Perseverance of the saints refuted.

a. *“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me”.* In this verse we can see the conditional nature of becoming a disciple. Denying self and bearing one's cross is something that needs to be done on a daily basis, and should we cease to do these things, then we cease to be a disciple.

2. Effects of this doctrine on faith.

a. Believing the *once saved always saved* doctrine only creates a false sense of security, which means our defenses will be down.

b. Believing that we can never be lost, we may develop a relaxed attitude toward sin: *“shall we continue in sin that grace may abound”* (Romans 6:1).

3. The word of God is full of statements warning us against apostatizing, such would be redundant if we could not fall, and there are even examples of those who did fall! Calvinism teaches *once saved always saved* but the word of God says, *“Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall”* (1 Corinthians 10:12).

## II. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A DISCIPLE?

A. Desiring to follow.

1. The Greek word for desire is *thelo* and means to desire, to determine, to will (see Strongs 2309).

2. We, then, must *will* or *choose* to follow Christ.

B. Denying self.

1. To be a true disciple one must deny one's self. The self is the old man.

2. Consider the following verses:

*“Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin”* (Romans 6:6).

*“Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump...”* (1 Corinthians 5:7).

*“That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which now grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts...and that you put on the new man”* (Ephesians 4:22-24).

*“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, and godly in the present age...”* (Titus 2:11-12).

C. Taking up our cross.

1. To *“take up”* the cross means to adopt an attitude of mind:

*Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind...”* (1 Peter 4:1).

2. People often refer to any suffering that they endure as "*The cross I have to bear*", which is an erroneous concept. Suffering in connection with our service to God is the suffering referred to.

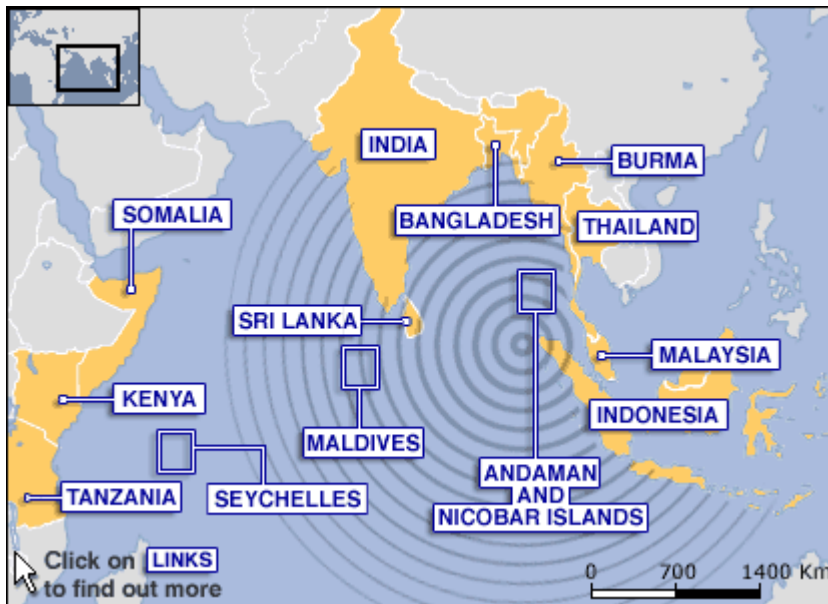
### **Conclusion**

1. We have seen in this lesson the errors of doctrines of Calvinism; we have seen the negative effects that such teachings can have on a person's faith. We have also learnt that in order to be a disciple, we must deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him on a daily basis.
2. It has been said that "*actions speak louder than words*", and that, "*our speech betrays our thoughts*", and the thoughts and behavior of many today indicates that their faith has been affected by Calvinistic doctrine, even though they may never have been taught it, which in turn has dampened their commitment.
3. In the next lesson we will examine the above in more detail, and discuss various ways of developing a growing commitment.

## CAUSE TO QUESTION THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

*The Foundation Of Our Faith*

### Story #1 THE TSUNAMI



**Impact:** The western tip of the Indonesian island of Sumatra, the closest inhabited area to the epicenter of the earthquake, was devastated by the tsunami. More than 70% of the inhabitants of some coastal villages are reported to have died.

**Toll:** 111,171 people died, while more than 127,000 others remain missing. The exact number of victims will probably never be known. The number of homeless is estimated at 800,000.

### Story #2 FAMILY DEVASTATED BY BOY'S DEATH

An eight-year-old boy killed when high winds caused a 100ft tree to fall was a "fun-loving rascal", his family say.

Timothy Sutton, of Urmston, was walking with 12 members of his family at Dunham Park, near Altrincham, Greater Manchester, when he was hit.

His mother, elder brother and younger sister were also hurt when a freak gust caused two 5ft-thick trees to fall on New Year's Day.

The park was closed on Sunday while tree surgeons made the area safe.

Timothy's mother, Julie, 37, suffered a fractured knee and ankle and his 19-year-old brother, Jamie, suffered cuts to his head and neck.

Both were taken to Trafford General Hospital, in Urmston, for treatment.

Timothy's two-year-old sister, Bethany, escaped with a scratch to her leg and his 14-year-old brother, Daniel, was uninjured.

The family had been out for lunch with other relatives at a nearby pub before setting out on a walk through the National Trust beauty spot, which was being buffeted by winds of up to 70mph.

Det Insp Allan Donoghue, of Greater Manchester Police, said: "They were walking through the main drive of the park when Timothy's father [Gerard] noticed the wind".



Timothy's family are "devastated" by his death

*"Timothy was making everybody laugh right up to the point the problems with the trees started"*  
- Claire Fitzpatrick, Timothy's aunt.

Timothy Sutton died while walking with his family in Dunham Park

*“They started to hear trees creaking around them and then one of the trees cracked and fell to the ground”.*

*“A number of the group were injured and Timothy was pinned beneath the trunk and crushed.”*

He said the scene looked like the aftermath of an explosion.

Timothy's mother and father were too upset to comment after the tragedy, but his aunt, Claire Fitzpatrick, 31, said he *“was a fun-loving rascal who we all loved dearly”*.

She added: *“He was making everybody laugh right up to the point the problems with the trees started. The whole family is devastated.”*



## Introduction

1. Both of these stories remind us once again of our vulnerability and the fragility of human life in the face of the forces of nature.
2. When nature unleashes her power there is the inevitable loss of life...whether on a large scale, in the case of the Tsunami, or a small scale, as in the case of Timothy Sutton.
3. It is on occasions such as these that people call into question the existence of God...

*“How can anyone believe in God after this?”*

*“If God really exists then why did he let my son die?”*

4. We might expect such an attitude from worldly minded people but not from Christians, surely?

## I. A WEAK FOUNDATION

A. For many people, personal tragedy is...

1. A cause to call into question the very existence of God or reinforce their belief that God does not exist.
2. This, in turn, leads to mocking and belittling of those whose faith holds firm.

B. It would seem that people are prepared to believe in God when things are going well and disbelieve in Him when tragedy strikes, is this so?

1. Certainly, when tragedy strikes people are quick to express their disbelief in God.
2. But I can't say I have witnessed people express a belief in God when they are blessed. So, for example, how many people declare their belief in God and are baptized when their first baby is born? Yet, they are quick to express their disbelief in God should their child die in an accident.

C. If our faith were dependant upon the blessings and tragedies we face throughout life, then we would find ourselves believing and disbelieving accordingly. Our faith is built upon a weak foundation if this is the case.

## II. A FIRM FOUNDATION

A. If our faith in God is shaken by some tragedy then it rests upon a weak foundation:

*“If anybody's faith in the existence of God has been put under strain by the Tsunami, or by any tragedy large or small, we must ask on what basis they believed in Him in the first place”* (Graham Fisher, *Cause To Question The Existence Of God!*, Volume 38, Number 2).



B. A Christian whose faith rests on a sure foundation will remain unshaken despite the tragedies of life.

1. On what does our faith rest?

*“Our faith depends upon an historical event: nothing more and nothing less” (Ibid).*

*“Once we decide and declare that ‘He is he Christ the Son of the living God,’ we might not be able to explain or understand all the mysteries which surround our existence here on Earth, but we can’t let tragedies shake our belief in the existence of God. We can’t let personal sorrows crush our faith and deny His existence because we can’t fully comprehend His ways” (Ibid).*

2. Can we lose our faith?

*“We can only lose our faith if our faith is not founded truly on the bedrock of Christ, and that bedrock is His resurrection” (Ibid).*

### III. THE ACCOUNT AND THE TESTIMONY OF APOSTOLIC EYEWITNESSES

A. The account of the resurrection from John’s gospel:

1. Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found the stone rolled away and went and told Peter and John (John 20:1-2).

2. Peter and John went to the tomb and saw for themselves that He was gone! (John 20:3-10).

3. Jesus appears to His disciples...

a. To Mary Magdalene outside the tomb (John 20:11-18).

b. To His disciples in the evening as they met behind closed doors (John 20:19-23).

c. To His disciples and Thomas eight days later behind closed doors (John 20:24-29).

d. To seven disciples beside the sea of Galilee (John 21:1-14).

4. John concludes by saying...

*“This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true” (John 21:24 NASB)*

B. The testimony of apostolic eyewitnesses:

1. They were eyewitnesses of His majesty (see Matthew 17:1-9):

*“For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased -- and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain” (2 Peter 1:16-18 NASB)*

2. They were eyewitnesses of His resurrection:

*“What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life-- and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us-- 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. These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete” (1 John 1:1-4 NASB)*

## Conclusion

1. For many people, every tragedy is cause to question the existence of God.
2. If someone's faith is so easily shaken then we must ask on what basis they believed in God in the first place?
3. A Christian's faith does not rest upon a foundation that is shaken by trials or personal tragedies but on the firm foundation of the most important historical fact in the history of mankind – the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.
4. The resurrection of Christ is a historical fact that many have tried to disprove but have failed, it a fact to which the apostles testify, and in addition, Peter says...

*“So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Peter 1:19-21 NASB)*

5. Throughout our lives we experience good things and bad things, blessings and tragedies, but whatever bad things or tragedies we face, it is no occasion to cause us to question the existence of God because our faith is founded on the fact of His resurrection; which faith caused us to believe at first.
6. We may not understand everything that goes on this world but we believe Paul when says...

*“And He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 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; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified” (Romans 8:27-30 NASB)*

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE REBELLIOUS

### Introduction

*“When I would heal Israel, The iniquity of Ephraim is uncovered, And the evil deeds of Samaria, For they deal falsely; The thief enters in, Bandits raid outside, And they do not consider in their hearts That I remember all their wickedness. Now their deeds are all around them; They are before My face. With their wickedness they make the king glad, And the princes with their lies. They are all adulterers, Like an oven heated by the baker Who ceases to stir up the fire From the kneading of the dough until it is leavened. On the day of our king, the princes became sick with the heat of wine; He stretched out his hand with scoffers, For their hearts are like an oven As they approach their plotting; Their anger smolders all night, In the morning it burns like a flaming fire. All of them are hot like an oven, And they consume their rulers; All their kings have fallen. None of them calls on Me. Ephraim mixes himself with the nations; Ephraim has become a cake not turned. Strangers devour his strength, Yet he does not know it; Gray hairs also are sprinkled on him, Yet he does not know it. Though the pride of Israel testifies against him, Yet they have not returned to the LORD their God, Nor have they sought Him, for all this. So Ephraim has become like a silly dove, without sense; They call to Egypt, they go to Assyria. When they go, I will spread My net over them; I will bring them down like the birds of the sky. I will chastise them in accordance with the proclamation to their assembly. Woe to them, for they have strayed from Me! Destruction is theirs, for they have rebelled against Me! I would redeem them, but they speak lies against Me. And they do not cry to Me from their heart When they wail on their beds; For the sake of grain and new wine they assemble themselves, They turn away from Me. Although I trained and strengthened their arms, Yet they devise evil against Me. They turn, but not upward, They are like a deceitful bow; Their princes will fall by the sword Because of the insolence of their tongue. This will be their derision in the land of Egypt” (Hosea 7:1-16 NASB)*

1. Israel’s rebellion had reached its zenith and there wasn’t anything left that God could do but punish them for their sins – God would allow the Assyrians to come and defeat them and take them into captivity.
2. Here we read of their many sins that add up to rebellion; and it is their rebellion that led to God’s judgement.
3. We are living in a day where rebellion against God is on every hand. It’s not just in this younger generation but also in the older generation. It’s a serious matter that a lot of people are taking too lightly.

*“A rebellious man seeks only evil, So a cruel messenger will be sent against him” (Proverbs 17:11)*

*“For rebellion is as the sin of divination, And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king” (1 Samuel 15:23)*

*“A man who hardens his neck after much reproof Will suddenly be broken beyond remedy” (Proverbs 29:1)*

4. In this lesson, we shall consider some of the characteristics of one who is rebellious.

### I. SECRET SINS

*“When I would heal Israel<sup>26</sup>, The iniquity of Ephraim<sup>27</sup> is uncovered, And the evil deeds of Samaria<sup>28</sup>...” (Hosea 7:1).*

- A. God made many attempts to heal His people but it only exposed greater sins. As one commentary says...

*“As the dangerous nature of a wound is often first brought out by the attempt to heal it, so was the corruption of Israel only brought truly to light by the effort to stem it” (K&D).*

1. This reminds me of the church at Corinth...

- a. The Lord had healed them...

*“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)*

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<sup>26</sup> The nation.

<sup>27</sup> The ruling tribe.

<sup>28</sup> The capital.

- b. But they continued in sin and, in some cases, revealed sins that were even abhorrent to unbelievers (1 Corinthians 5:1).
2. Paul's letter, like Hosea's message, exposed their sins, but whereas Israel had gone beyond the point of no return, the Corinthians had the opportunity to repent.
- B. What secret sins might we be harbouring? Ungodly motives, illicit desires, sinful behaviour of which brethren are unaware. You can hide your secret sins from people but you cannot hide them from God. Here are two examples of rebellion that were exposed and punished:
1. Achan took spoils of silver and gold forbidden by the Lord and buried it in the ground in his tent. His secret sin was exposed and he was put to death (Joshua 7:1-26).
  2. Ananias and Sapphira lied about their contribution but their secret sin was exposed and they were put to death (Acts 5:1-11).

*"But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all; the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you" (1 Corinthians 14:24-25)*

**And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest** - Made manifest to himself in a surprising and remarkable manner. He shall be led to see the "real" designs and motives of his heart. His conscience would be awakened; he would recall his former course of life; he would see that it was evil; and the present state of his heart would be made known to himself. It is possible that he would "suppose that the speaker was aiming directly at him, and "revealing" his feelings to others; for such an effect is often produced. The convicted sinner often supposes that the preacher particularly intends "him," and wonders that he has such an acquaintance with his feelings and his life; and often supposes that he is designing to disclose his feelings to the congregation (Barnes).

## II. FALSEHOOD AND LYING

*"...For they deal falsely; The thief enters in, Bandits raid outside...Woe to them, for they have strayed from Me! Destruction is theirs, for they have rebelled against Me! I would redeem them, but they speak lies against Me" (Hosea 7:1, 13 NASB)*

- A. The Lord brings two charges against His people: "*They deal falsely*" and "*They speak lies against Me.*"
1. The false dealing probably refers to their everyday interaction in daily living and business.
  2. Barnes gives the meaning of speaking lies against God: "*Whoever seeks anything out of God or against His will; whoever seeks from man, or from idols, or from fortune, or from his own powers, what God alone bestows; whoever acts as if God was not a good God, ready to receive the penitent, or a just God who will avenge the holiness of His laws and "not clear the guilty," does in fact, 'speak lies against God'"*
- B. Do we deal falsely with one another and lie against God? We do if we say that we are too ill to come to worship and then prayers are offered up to God for the speedy recovery from an imaginary illness, give begrudgingly and sparingly into the treasury, say we are too busy to help distribute literature when we simply can't be bothered, and when life revolves around what we want and not what God wants.

## III. UNCONCERNED HEARTS

*"And they do not consider in their hearts That I remember all their wickedness. Now their deeds are all around them; They are before My face" (Hosea 7:2 NASB)*

- A. Apathy and consequences:
1. If you stick a pin in your arm, there is the initial pain and perhaps a little blood, but the pain quickly subsides and, with a little distraction, you will forget the pin is there. God's people had become so accustomed to thinking, speaking, and behaving wickedly that their hearts had become seared (Cp. Ephesians 4:19; 1 Timothy 4:2); they no longer grieved when they sinned and perhaps they didn't even see it as sin anymore (See Jeremiah 2:35). Such is the deceitfulness of sin (Cp. Hebrews 3:13).
  2. God's chosen people did not care to think about the divine attributes anymore: the facts that God is everywhere, He knows everything, and He is all powerful. Though men choose to ignore their sin, God will *not* forget and they are always in the forefront of His mind. God **will** judge them for their sins.

- B. Have we allowed our hearts to become indifferent, apathetic, and calloused? Do we believe that God remembers our sins? Do we believe that we will have to give an account to God on the judgement day?

### Conclusion

1. A father who loves his children will not shrink from disciplining them when they go astray. Time and time again God's chosen people went astray but He continued to send prophets to call them to repentance and warn them of His judgement if they refused.
2. Rebellion against God is a very serious sin and the consequences no less serious. Are any of us here today rebelling against God? If we harbour secret sins, practice deceit and lying, and do not consider in our hearts that God remembers our sins, then we are rebelling against God.
3. Today, God does not send prophets to call us to repentance, but He does still appeal to us through His word:
  - a. Let us remember that God has cleansed us...

*"On the contrary, you yourselves wrong and defraud. You do this even to your brethren. 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 6:8-11 NASB)*

*"Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light" (Ephesians 5:11-13)*

- b. As Christians, we are to put away sin...

*"Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him" (Colossians 3:2-10 NASB)*

4. Having been baptised is no guarantee of salvation unless we continue to walk in the truth. I leave you with this admonition:

*"Not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, vengeance is mine, I will repay. And again, the Lord will judge His people. It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:25-31)*



# CHRIST OUR PASSOVER

## Introduction

1. John the Baptist saw Jesus coming and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29). The idea of a lamb being sacrificed as a burnt offering, a fellowship offering or a sin offering is not strange (see Genesis 22:7- 8; Leviticus 3:6-7; 4:32), but to apply such terms to a man may have perplexed a good few people. But for us there is no mystery; we understand the concept perfectly well, but only because of the great vantage point we are at now.
2. As we look back in the Old Testament, we read many stories in which Jesus is prefigured and in some we see the sacrificial lamb as the type.
3. Today, we will look at just one of these accounts in which a sacrificial lamb is clearly seen as prefiguring Jesus.

## I. JUDGMENT

- A. The Israelites were forewarned of the judgment to come upon them (Exodus 11:4-6, 12). The New Testament warns us of the coming judgment (Matthew 5:21-22; Acts 24:24-25; Romans 2:1-4). God's kindness leads to repentance (Romans 2:4).
- B. There was time and opportunity to repent. After each plague Pharaoh hardened his heart (Exodus 7:22-23; 8:15, 19; 9:7; 11:9-10). The New Testament also shows us God's desire for all men to repent (1 Timothy 2:3); He may give men time to repent (Revelation 2:20-21). God is patient not wanting any to perish (2 Peter 3:8-9).
- C. The judgment came swiftly (Exodus 12:29). The New Testament tells us that the final judgment will also come quickly (2 Peter 3:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-4, 9).

## II. THE REDEEMER AND THE REDEEMED

- A. Salvation announced (Exodus 11:7; 12:3). In the New Testament, Jesus tells His disciples to go into the world (Mark 16:16). There is no other way (Acts 4:12). The gospel has reached all the world (Colossians 1:23).
- B. The redeemer - a lamb from their own flock (Exodus 12:37 > Hebrews 7:14). A lamb without defect (Exodus 12:5 > 1 Peter 1:18-19; Cp. 1 Peter 2:22). A lamb killed by the people (Exodus 12:6 > Acts 2:22-23).
- C. The redeemed - a new time, a new life (Exodus 12:2, 17 > John 3:3; Romans 6:1-4). The redeemed would remain in the house (Exodus 12:22 > Acts 2:47). The redeemed would be feeding on the Lamb (Exodus 12:8 > John 6:53-56). They will be ready to go (Exodus 12:11 > Matthew 24:36-44).

## III. THE LAMB

- A. Chosen (Exodus 12:5 > 1 Peter 1:20) - chosen in eternity (1 Peter 1:17-21).
- B. Slain (Exodus 12:6 > Revelation 5:6-9) - slain to purchase a people for God (Acts 20:28; Titus 2:14).
- C. The Lamb fed on (Exodus 12:5, 8 > 1 Corinthians 5:8) - Let us keep the Passover (1 Corinthians 5:8).

## IV. THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB

- A. The Blood was shed (Exodus 12:6). Jesus' blood was shed to atone for our sin (1 Peter 1:18-19).
- B. The blood was applied to the lintels by faith (Exodus 12:22). The blood of Christ only cleanses us if we have faith (Romans 3:25).
- C. The blood was a sign and prevented the wrath of God coming on those inside the house (Exodus 12:13). We have been cleansed by the blood of Christ and those who remain in Christ do not come under condemnation (Romans 8:1).

## V. PREACHING THE CROSS

- A. We must warn people of the judgment to come. God's wrath is seen in Jesus on the cross (1 Peter 2:22-25).
- B. The Lamb of God nailed to the cross is the only way of salvation, the only way to be reconciled to God (Ephesians 2:14-16).
- C. Only by accepting the fact that Jesus died on the cross can we obtain the forgiveness of our sins (Colossians 1:13-14).

### Conclusion

1. When God brought the final judgment upon Egypt none were spared except God's own people. They were saved by grace through faith, yet their faith was seen by their obedience to His instructions.
2. Through faith in the blood of Christ we too can escape condemnation. If you are not a Christian then you need to be baptized into Christ: *"For there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"* (Romans 8:1). If you are a Christian, then remember that you have been *"reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight: If you continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel"* (Colossians 1:22-23).



# CHRIST'S GIFTS TO THE CHURCH

*An Exposition Of Ephesians 4:11-16*

## Introduction

1. All religious organisations (i.e., The Lord's church and denominations) are concerned about growth – spiritual and numerical. Over the years I have discussed this subject with elders, preachers, members, and even denominational folk. Some of the suggestions in order to achieve such growth have been (i) *“You just have to keep driving the brethren until they do something,”* said one preacher in a rather angry tone (ii) By far the most popular methods for growth were to hold more events at the building – gospel meetings, pot-luck lunches, coffee mornings, a crèche for working mums, a youth club, lock-ins, etc. Worldly allurements attract the carnal minded (John 6:26), and the things of the Spirit draw the spiritual minded (1 Corinthians 2:14-15; John 6:68). How does Jesus draw men to Himself?



*“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up...And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself” (John 3:14; 12:32 NASB)*

2. While He was on earth, Jesus devoted Himself to preaching the good news of God's coming kingdom (Mark 1:14-15, 39; Luke 4:43-44; 8:1; 20:1) and to teaching His disciples about its nature and the necessary characteristics one must possess to enter it (Matthew 5:1-7:29; John 3:1-8). Jesus also selected twelve men to be apostles (Luke 6:12-16), whom He taught and trained for a period of three years. The apostles were to become ambassadors of Christ and the foundation on which God's household would be built (Ephesians 2:19-20; cp. Revelation 21:14).
3. God's kingdom was not a kingdom like those of this world (John 18:36); it was to be a spiritual kingdom (1 Peter 2:4-5). Its establishment was at hand or near (Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:14-15), and, in fact, would come during the lifetime of that generation (Matthew 16:28; Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27). Following Jesus' death, burial and resurrection, Jesus appeared to His apostles over a period of forty days and spoke to them about God's kingdom (Acts 1:1-3), the establishment of which was now only a few days away. Jesus had said that God's kingdom would come with power (Mark 9:1), and He now instructed His apostles to wait in Jerusalem to be clothed with power when the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 1:4-8). The fulfillment of this is seen in Acts 2:1-4.
4. After instructing the apostles, Jesus ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9) to sit at the right hand of God (Acts 2:32-36). Having secured victory over the Devil (Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3:8), sin (Romans 6:6-14; 8:3-4; Hebrews 9:26; 1 John 3:5) and death (Romans 6:9; 8:2; 1 Corinthians 15:21, 26, 54-55; 2 Timothy 1:10), Jesus, gave gifts to men. *“As a conqueror distributes in token of his triumph the spoils of foes as gifts among his people”* (Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary). These gifts are specified in Ephesians 4:11.
5. In this lesson, we shall examine the gifts, consider their purpose, look at the desired results, and discuss the practical application in accomplishing the desired results.

## I. CHRIST'S GIFTS TO HIS CHURCH (Ephesians 4:11)

A. *“And He gave some as apostles...”*

1. From among His disciples, Jesus selected twelve men to be apostles (Luke 6:12-16).
2. It is to these twelve that Jesus promised the Holy Spirit who would lead them into all the truth (John 16:12-13; Acts 1:4-5, 8; 2:1-4).
3. The apostles were eyewitnesses of His resurrection (Acts 1:21-22) and acted as ambassadors of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20).
4. The apostles taught the doctrine of Christ (Matthew 28:19-20; 1 John 4:6; 1 Corinthians 14:37; 1 Thessalonians 4:2), and revealed the organization (Elders Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23 and Deacons Acts 6:1-4; their qualifications 1 Timothy 3:1-15; in practice Philippians 1:1), worship (1 Corinthians 14:26), and work (1 Corinthians 9:14; 16:1-3) of the church in all the churches of Christ (1 Corinthians 4:17; 7:17).



B. "...and some as prophets..."

1. A prophet is defined as *one who speaks for another* – Aaron was Moses prophet (Exodus 7:1). In the Bible, the reference is usually one who speaks for God under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (1 Sam. 3:1-20).
2. "*Prophets were inspired teachers and were often associated with the apostles in the New Testament (Ephesians 2:19-23; 3:4-5; 4:11). They contributed truth to the early brethren under the direction of the Holy Spirit which supplemented that brought by the apostles (Acts 11:27-30; 13:1-3; 21:9)*" (Colly Caldwell, Ephesians, Truth Commentaries).
3. In accordance with the Holy Spirit's promise through Joel (Joel 2:28-32), there were both men and women who prophesied (Acts 21:9-10). There were prophets in the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 12:8-12) and Antioch (Acts 13:1-3).

C. "...and some as evangelists..."

1. An evangelist is "*lit., 'a messenger of good' (eu, 'well,' angelos, 'a messenger'), denotes a 'preacher of the gospel,' Act\_21:8; Eph\_4:11, which makes clear the distinctiveness of the function in the churches; 2Ti\_4:5. Cf. euangelizo, 'to proclaim glad tidings,' and euangelion, 'good news, gospel.' Missionaries are 'evangelists,' as being essentially preachers of the gospel*" (Vine).
2. Philip and Timothy are called evangelists and they have a work to do (Acts 21:8; 2 Timothy 4:4); they are to preach the gospel and teach sound doctrine (2 Timothy 4:1-5).

D. "...and some as pastors and teachers..."

1. The textual wording seems to indicate that one person was in mind here. In other words, Paul is saying, he gave some who would both pastor and teach.
2. The New Testament refers those who have been appointed as rulers over a particular congregation as pastors or shepherds, overseers or bishops, elders or presbyters. These are not different offices but, rather, each title is descriptive of their responsibilities.
3. Pastors oversee the local church to which they belong (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1-5; Titus 1:5, 7; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15).

## II. THE REASON CHRIST GAVE THESE GIFTS TO THE CHURCH (Ephesians 4:12-13)

A. "...for the equipping of the saints..."

1. The word *equipping* is from the Greek word *katartismos*, "*a fitting or preparing fully*" (Vine). Barclay says, "*The word is used in surgery for setting a broken limb or for putting a joint back in place*".
2. Mark employs the word to describe the *mending* of nets (Mark 1:19). "*Spiritually it speaks of restoration to right living (Galatians 6:1) or to the attainment of wholeness in the inner man (2 Corinthians 13:9; Hebrews 11:3; 13:21; 1 Thessalonians 3:10; 1 Peter 5:10). Every desire, every thought, every action, every belief must be put in its proper place. It must be brought into captivity to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5)*" (Colly Caldwell, Ephesians, Truth Commentaries).
3. The idea, then, is that apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors were given as gifts to the church for *putting into place* those things that were necessary for the saints to do the work of God. "*The perfecting (katartismos) here means to mend, putting everything in its place, to make ready or fit. This is achieved through the corrective and instructive teaching of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors*" (D. Collins, Quotes & Things, Commentary, Ephesians).

B. "...for the work of service..."

1. The corrective and instructive teaching of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors is to make ready for (with a view to) the work of service. The word *service* is from the Greek word *diakonia*, and the general meaning is *to serve*. Practically, it means to render that which is lacking in the supply of physical and spiritual needs. In this context spiritual service is what is in view, because Paul is speaking of our attaining unity and maturity "*to the measure and stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ*" (Ephesians 4:13).
2. In thinking of a spiritual minister, many think only of the preacher, but this verse clearly teaches that all the saints (the one's who have been equipped) must teach the lost (2 Timothy 2:2; Acts 8:3-4; 5:42), encourage the weak (Romans 14:1-23), care for the needy (Acts 4:32-37), and comfort the suffering (Matthew 25:31-46). This can be achieved individually (James 1:27; Galatians 6:10) and collectively as a church (1 Corinthians 16:1-4; Acts 11:27-30; 1 Thessalonians 1:7-9).



C. "...to the building up of the body of Christ..."

1. The word *to* means, "*with a view toward*", and means, that the equipping of the saints to serve is with a view towards building up the body of Christ – the church.
2. This "*building up*" is enlarging, strengthening, and growing through enduring and patient effort. It refers to an increase in numerical growth through the conversion of lost souls and to the strengthening of Christians through preaching and teaching (See Acts 2:42, 47). That this is a work of all the saints is seen in Acts 8:4 and 1 Corinthians 14:23-26.

"The success expected by Christ in achieving his purposes in giving the gifts depends upon the spiritual growth of individual Christians. That important factor was especially significant to Paul in helping us to understand God's will for all the saints in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 4:13-16)" (Colly Caldwell, Truth Commentaries, Ephesians).

D. "...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."

1. "...to the unity of the faith...". The work of ministering and building up the body of Christ must continue until we all attain the unity of the faith. This is not speaking of personal faith but of "*the faith*" or the body of truth revealed in the New Testament (See Jude 1:3). The idea is, that we should all hold the same truths (Cp. 1 Corinthians 1:10). As Paul said earlier, "*There is...one faith*" (Ephesians 4:4-5).
2. "...and of the knowledge of the Son of God". The idea here is that we all arrive at a precise and correct understanding of Jesus' identity and what He teaches.
3. "...to a mature man...". The meaning is that, we can say that we have reached maturity when we have attained to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God. However, if any man has understanding, then he will know that such a maturity is one for which he will ever be striving.
4. "...to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ." This explains what is meant by "*to a mature man*". How do we know if we have actually reached such a level of maturity? Well, the measure or standard is not ourselves or some other man, but Christ. We reach maturity when we attain the qualities of Christlikeness; when God can look at you and is not able to tell whether He is looking at you or Jesus. But who will ever attain to that in this life (1 Corinthians 15:49; 1 John 3:2)?! Yet we must continually strive for such maturity (Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

### III. THE CONSEQUENCE (Ephesians 4:14-16)

- A. *“As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming...”*
1. *“As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine...”*. Children, as the word implies, are immature in their thinking and their behavior; they are easily swayed, misled, and manipulated.
    - a. When a Christian doesn’t grow spiritually he *“remains unlearned, weak, and unstable; he does not act or talk maturely (1 Corinthians 13:11; 3:1; 14:20); he is shallow, credulous, and too easily influenced toward danger”* (Colly Caldwell, Truth Commentaries, Ephesians).
    - b. A Christian in such a state of immaturity is *tossed here and there*. This refers to an unsettled state of mind in which a person is constantly being influenced by one doctrine and then by another...his mind is never settled; he never comes to any firm convictions. So, in his immature state, he is constantly being swayed this way and that, tossed here and there at the constant comings and goings of doctrines.
  2. *“...by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming...”*. The immature are easy pray for false teachers who resort to every means in order to deceive and lead astray the children of God.
- B. *“...but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”*
1. *“...but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ...”*. False teachers deceive and lie to lead astray, but Christians are to speak the truth, and that from the motive of love. *“Speaking the truth in love is an essential component in the maturation process of Christians. To grow up (auxesomen) is to be increased or enlarged. It affects every aspect of our spiritual lives. The maturity of the child of God is in relation to Christ, the head”* (Colly Caldwell, Truth Commentaries, Ephesians).
  2. *“...from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”* The meaning is that, the church is formed by the union of all the members under the head, Christ. And the church grows to maturity by the proper exercise of the talents and graces of every individual for the benefit of the whole.

### IV. PRACTICALLY SPEAKING, HOW CAN WE ACCOMPLISH THIS GROWTH?

- A. It will not be accomplished through the wisdom and innovations of men: some brethren seem to think that inventing offices (Associate Minister, Youth Minister, etc.), putting on social events (Pot lucks, fellowship meals, coffee mornings, etc), providing entertainment (Choirs, plays, Bible quizzes etc), and taking on the role of social services (Prison ministries, running orphan homes, etc.) is equipping the saints and evidence of spiritual growth. But I don’t believe this is true.
- B. The saints will only be equipped if they take advantage of the gifts that Christ has given to the church, and if the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors continue to edify the church. The concept of *“edifying”* is general and each church is at liberty to choose the specific method that is most effective:
1. Sermons.
  2. Bible classes (A congregation may deem it most appropriate and effective to have separate classes for children, young adults, and adults – some larger congregations even have classes for adults aged 21-50 and 50+).
  3. Media: DVDs, CDs, magazines, bulletins, books, etc.
  4. Home Bible studies.

## Conclusion

1. When Christ ascended into heaven as the conquering King of Kings, He gave gifts to the church – Apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors.
2. The purpose of giving the church apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors is for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, and this with the view towards building up the church.
3. This building up must continue until we are all united in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God.
4. The ultimate goal is to reach maturity; when we have attained the quality of Christlikeness.
5. Reaching a state of maturity will prevent us being tossed here and there by every wind of doctrine by false teachers.
6. Spiritual maturity and numerical growth cannot be achieved by inventing offices, putting on social events, taking on the role of social services, or providing entertainment – it comes through the preaching and teaching of God's word.

### The point of the lesson:

God expects to see growth in His church – numerical growth and spiritual growth – but such growth can only take place if *all* the members of Christ's body are – whether acting individually or corporately – are striving to achieve that growth; and Jesus has given gifts to the church for this very purpose.

**Evangelists and pastors** must see to it that they continue in the work the Lord has assigned to them in building up the body of Christ. Individually, each one of us must recognise the gifts that the Lord has given to the church: we must heed and abide the teaching of the apostles and prophets; heed and apply the teaching of evangelists (as much as it agrees with the Scriptures), and hold up their hands in the preaching of the gospel; and we must submit to the rule of the shepherds who rule over the flock.

**The church** (i.e., all the members) must ensure that every provision is made for the growth and edification of individual members, and that we continue to fulfil the mission the Lord has given His church – preaching the gospel to the lost.

**Individuals** must ensure that they continue to think of others better than ourselves, and seek to edify and serve one another in love. Let us also not forget to love our neighbors in seeking both their physical and spiritual welfare. Each one of us must ensure that we are taking advantage of *all* the opportunities the church provides to grow in knowledge (Whether sermons, Bible study classes, ladies classes, etc.)

The Lord assures us that, as each member of the body does its part, both numerical and spiritual growth will be the consequence.

### Notes:

It might be objected that we no longer have apostles and prophets. While it is true that they are no longer in this world, they still exercise their rule and influence through the inspired books and epistles they have left behind. For example, we read that the first disciples devoted themselves to the apostles doctrine (Acts 2:42), and we too may do the same by adhering to the teachings of their epistles.

If I had to write a paraphrase of Ephesians 4:11-16, then this would be it...

*“The gifts that the Lord has given to the church are the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors, and He gave these to equip the saints for the work of service, with a view to the building up of the body of Christ. This must continue until we are all united in doctrine, and have the same understanding of Jesus' identity and His teaching, until we become mature; and by mature I mean to the same level of maturity that we see in Christ. As a result of growing in maturity, we cannot remain immature, being tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming of false teachers; but, rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body is formed by the union of all its members, and grows to maturity as each member exercises their talents and graces for the benefit of the whole in love”*



# CHRIST'S SUFFERING AND OURS

*An Exposition Of 1 Peter 3:18-4:1*

## Introduction

1. This passage of Scripture is acknowledged by many as being difficult to interpret, and many commentators have struggled to understand some of the phrases Peter has penned.
2. Having examined various works, I have come to an understanding of my own which I will now set forth below.
3. Here are some of the questions I have tried to answer in this lesson:
  - a. Did Jesus go to Hell and preach the gospel to those it held?
  - b. Does water save us?
  - c. What does Peter mean by "*filth of the flesh*"?
  - d. What does "*but the answer of a good conscience*" mean?

## I. JESUS' SUFFERING (3:18a)

### A. Christ also suffered.

1. In the preceding verses (8-17) Peter instructs these Christians to live a righteous life, even in the face of persecution, keeping a clear conscience.
2. Christians will sometimes suffer for doing good but Peter reminds them that:

*"Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust" (1 Peter 3:18).*

### 3. Jesus Himself had said:

*"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you" (John 15:18)*

*"Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also" (John 15:20)*

### B. The completeness of Jesus' death.

#### 1. A perfect sacrifice. Animal sacrifices were unable to remit sin:

*"For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4)*

#### 2. Jesus, when He instituted the communion, said of the memorial wine:

*"For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28)*

#### 3. The Hebrew writer says:

*"Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin" (Hebrews 10:18)*

#### 4. An expiatory sacrifice.

- a. Jesus atoned for our sins; He made amends for us.

#### 5. A vicarious sacrifice.

- a. Jesus suffered in our place; He bore the punishment that was due to us. Jesus substituted Himself for us (see Isaiah 53).

### C. The result of Jesus' death.

1. The reason for Jesus' death was, "*that He might bring us to God.*"

2. The sins that we committed separated us from God (Isaiah 59:1-2) and sold us as slaves into sin (Romans 7:14).

*“But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ”*  
(Ephesians 2:13)

*“But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness”* (Romans 6:17-18)

## II. JUDGMENT AND SALVATION (3:18c-20)

### A. A disobedient generation

1. Jesus was “*put to death in the flesh*” but was raised up again by the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul says of Jesus' resurrection that He was...

*“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)

2. By this same Spirit, Jesus went and preached to the “*spirits in prison*”. There are two commonly held interpretations:
  - a. Jesus went, in the spirit, and preached to the spirits in Hades after His death on the cross.
  - b. Jesus went and preached, through the Spirit, to those who are now in Hades.
3. It is the latter view that I hold to at this time because of the following reasons:
  - a. Jesus said that He would be in paradise (Luke 23:43); nothing was ever said about visiting the place of torment.
  - b. Jesus only preached to “*those who were formerly disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah.*” What about the rest of mankind?!

### B. Noah - a man of faith.

1. Jesus, through the Spirit, went and preached to the generation of Noah.
2. The Spirit spoke through Noah to warn the people that they would be destroyed if they did not repent, but they would not.
3. During the time it took to build the ark (120 years) God waited patiently.
4. We can only imagine the abuse Noah suffered as he preached repentance, the scorn he endured as he spoke of a coming judgment, and the mockings he tolerated when those evil men saw him day by day preparing the ark. This ark being symbolic of his faith by which he condemned the world (Hebrews 11:7).
5. Noah's godly fear enabled him to patiently endure and finally the judgment came, the world was destroyed by water, yet Noah and his family were carried to safety by the same water.

### C. The antitype.

1. Why did Peter choose this particular example? Why not the example of Sodom and Gomorrah? Because he wanted to assure his readers of their salvation, and this example best served that purpose with its link with water.
2. Noah and his family were “*saved through water*”, which was a type pointing to baptism “*which now saves us, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ*”. Could it be any clearer than that? BAPTISM SAVES US, THROUGH THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.
3. Peter has said that baptism saves us “*through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*”
4. By this Peter is pointing to the foundation of our faith: the death, burial, and resurrection which is the foundation of our faith; the focal point being the resurrection; for...



*“And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain” (1 Corinthians 15:14)*

5. The water of baptism would not carry us to safety if it were not for these gospel facts.

D. Not this but that!

1. In a parentheses, Peter makes it clear that baptism is not just a symbolic rite (as so many affirm today), like so many of the Jewish washings were, but is *“an appeal for a good conscience toward God.”*
2. Under the old covenant the worshipper could not be made perfect *“as pertaining to the conscience”* (Hebrews 9:14).
3. They are later reminded that they are now able to, *“draw near (to God) with a true heart in full assurance of faith”*. Why? Because they had had their *“hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience”* and their *“bodies washed with pure water”* (Hebrews 10:22).
4. God, then, gives us at baptism that which could not be obtained under the old system, viz. A clear conscience, with respect to our sin.

E. Arm yourselves with the same mind.

1. Peter was writing to Christians who were *“grieved by various trials”* and he was trying to assure them of their salvation.
2. Peter pointed to Noah as an example of three things:
  - a. Noah held on to his faith despite the opposition.
  - b. The judgment of God did finally come and the wicked are now in prison.
  - c. Noah and his family were delivered as God had promised.
3. Likewise:
  - a. They were to hold to their faith despite the opposition.
  - b. They could be sure of God's coming judgment upon the wicked.
  - c. The fact that they had been baptized was their assurance of salvation.
4. These Christians, then, were to be prepared to suffer, *“since Christ suffered for us”*.

### **Conclusion**

1. The overall message of these verses is that, although we may be undergoing grievous trials, Christ also suffered and we ought to arm ourselves with the same mind. In addition, we may look to many Old Testament examples to inspire faith, assurance, confidence, and endurance in ourselves. We may also, from these examples, be sure that our faith is not in vain, that God will bring judgment on the wicked, and that our salvation is assured in Christ, through faith.
2. On a doctrinal note, we learn that baptism is not a mere ceremonial washing but an essential act of obedience by which we are saved. Moreover, by this act of obedience God gives us a clear conscience, in respect to our sins.



## CONDUCT YOURSELVES IN FEAR

*1 Peter 1:17-19*

### Introduction

1. In the previous lesson, we examined Matthew 16:26, and discussed the value of the human soul. We concluded that the soul is valuable for two reasons:
  - a. Because it is the only thing we possess that will last forever.
  - b. Because of the high price that God paid to redeem us from death.
2. It is all too easy to say that we value our soul, and it is easy to claim that we appreciate the great price that God had to pay to redeem us, but how can you know for certain? Peter gives us the answer:

*“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: Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:17-19)*

- a. To paraphrase, Peter is saying, you know and appreciate the value of your souls, you know the high price that was paid for them, and it is this knowledge that should motivate you to conduct yourselves here in fear.
- b. Paul says the same thing in a different way:

*“For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's” (1 Corinthians 6:20)*

3. Having established this, let us now answer the following questions:

- a. What does it mean to conduct ourselves in fear?
- b. What will be the effect of this fear upon our conduct?

### I. CONDUCTING OURSELVES IN FEAR

- A. The word *fear* in this verse means, “*Reverential fear, a wholesome dread of displeasing Him*” (Vine's).
- B. Vine goes on to say that this reverential fear of God will act as “*a controlling motive of the life, in matters spiritual and moral*”. Note the following examples:
  1. Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1-3). What effect did God's judgment have upon Aaron?
  2. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). What effect did this judgment of God have upon people (Vs. 5, 11)?
  3. The Hebrew midwives (Exodus 1:17). How did the fear of God control these women's behavior?
- C. Proper fear of the Lord always produces the right behavior:

*“Behold, to morrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof even until now. Send therefore now, and gather thy cattle, and all that thou hast in the field; for upon every man and beast which shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die. He that feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses: And he that regarded not the word of the Lord left his servants and his cattle in the field” (Exodus 9:18-21)*

## II. THE EFFECT OF PROPER FEAR OF GOD IN OUR LIVES

- A. The fear of God produces an inward renewal of the mind (Ephesians 4:20-23).
- B. The fear of God produces submission to the will of God (1 Peter 4:1-2; 1 John 2:17).
- C. The fear of God produces Godliness in our lives (Hebrews 12:28) [which is 'reverence manifested in actions' - Vine].

### Conclusion

1. If we wish to know the value that God has placed upon the soul, then we only need to go to Calvary and there see Jesus on the cross, offering His soul as an offering for our sin.
2. The value God placed on our souls is seen in the action He took to redeem us from hell. Likewise, the value we place on our souls will be seen by our obedience and service we render to God.

*“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)*

# CONTENDING EARNESTLY FOR THE FAITH

## *False Teaching And Our Response*

### Introduction

*“Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ: May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you. Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. 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. Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe. And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire. Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties. But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, The Lord rebuke you! But these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed. Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever. It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him. These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage. But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they were saying to you, In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts. These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. And have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh. Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen” (Jude 1:1-25)*

#### THE AUTHOR OF JUDE

Jude, the brother of James and the half-brother of the Lord (Matthew 13:55). In Jude 1 the author mentions the fact that he is also the brother of James. After looking at the different James in the New Testament, this one is also likely the author of the epistle and the half brother of Jesus as well. Also since the letter does not make mention of any apostolic authority but rather refers to himself as simply the “servant of Jesus Christ”, we can conclude that the author was probably Judah, the half brother of Jesus. Most Christians accept this view.

1. This is a short letter written by Jude, the half brother of Jesus, somewhere between A.D. 65 and A.D. 70.
2. Jude wanted to write to these brethren about their common salvation but found it necessary to address an immediate threat to the church: false teachers, who had crept in unnoticed, had perverted the gospel and were deceiving the brethren.
3. In this lesson, we shall take a look at the false teaching that threatened the church and Jude’s instruction to counter it.

### I. IS GOD’S GRACE A LICENSE TO SIN?

- A. False teachers had perverted the grace of God into sensuality – how did they do this? They did this by drawing ungodly conclusions from the apostles’ teaching.
  1. *“The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more” (Romans 5:20 NASB). From this, one might argue, “If sin has been the occasion of grace and favor, ought we not to continue in it, and commit as much as possible, in order that grace might abound?” (Barnes).*
  2. *“What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!” (Romans 6:15). From this, one might argue, “If Christians are not under the law, which forbids all sin, but are under grace, which pardons sin, will it not follow that they will feel themselves released from obligation to be holy? Will they not commit sin freely, since the system of grace is one which contemplates pardon, and which will lead them to believe that they may be forgiven to any extent?” (Barnes).*

## B. Paul refutes this ungodly teaching:

## 1. In answer to the first argument, Paul says...

*“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. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God” (Romans 6:1-13)*

## 2. In answer to the second argument, Paul says...

*“For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? 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, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:14-23)*

Here are some other verses for consideration:

**Galatians 6:7-8** God is not mocked, you reap what you sow.

**1 Corinthians 6:19-20** Your body is a temple of the Lord and we must use our body to glorify God.

**1 Peter 2:11** The flesh wars against the Spirit – they are not partners!

**Romans 6:16-17** You are the slave of the one whom you obey.

## II. WHAT INSTRUCTIONS DID JUDE GIVE TO THE CHURCH?

## A. They were to contend earnestly for the faith.

## 1. What does it mean to “contend earnestly”?

- a. The word “contend” is from the Greek word *epagonizomai* and it signifies “‘to contend about a thing, as a combatant’ (*epi*, ‘upon or about,’ intensive, *agon*, ‘a contest’), ‘to contend earnestly,’ Jude 1:3. The word ‘earnestly’ is added to convey the intensive force of the preposition” (Vine’s).
- b. The primary physical action of “contend earnestly” was often applied to a skilled wrestler. His object was both defensive and offensive: to avoid being thrown and attempting to succeed in throwing his opponent. Involved in Jude’s spiritual use, there is definitely much energy and aggression in the word *epagonizomai*.

2. Here are some examples of contending earnestly for the faith:

- a. *“Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved. And when **Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them**, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue”* (Acts 15:1-2). Not only did Paul and Barnabas debate the teaching of these false teachers, but they also went to Jerusalem to determine the origin of the false doctrine and to learn the extent of its acceptance in the church at Jerusalem. When they arrived, they continued to discuss and debate this false doctrine (Acts 15: 4-12); they were determined that the matter be resolved (vs. 13-30). Paul and Barnabas were doing precisely what Jude commanded, they were contending earnestly for the faith.
- b. Paul’s instruction to Timothy, *“...remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith”* (1 Timothy 1:2-4). And, *“I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry”* (2 Timothy 4:1-5).

B. They were not to be alarmed or allow themselves to be caught off guard by these false teachers because they had been warned beforehand: *“But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Jude 1:17). Also Acts 20:30; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:1-6.

C. They were to build one another up in the faith: *“But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit”* (Jude 1:20). This is attained through personal Bible study, remaining steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine.

*“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)

D. They were to keep themselves in the love of God: *“Keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life”* (Jude 1:21). This speaks of our covenant relationship – our fellowship with God. To keep ourselves in the love of God and in fellowship with God means walking in the light and keeping His commandments (1 John 1:6-7; John 14:15).

E. They were to be merciful to those who were doubting or caught up in error: *“And have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh”* (Jude 1:22-23). We must do our best to restore those who are flirting with sin and those who have been led astray (Cp. Galatians 6:1).

### Conclusion

1. *“If sin has been the occasion of grace and favor, ought we not to continue in it, and commit as much as possible, in order that grace might abound?” Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?* The answer to both these questions is NO! It may seem astonishing to us that men had perverted the gospel in this way and yet they had!
2. The gospel is still being perverted today and the advice we give today is the same as was given by Jude in the first century:

- a. Don't be surprised by this and other perversions of the gospel because the apostles have warned us often enough that this would happen.
  - b. Whenever perversions of the gospel are taught, we must be ever ready to *contend earnestly for the faith*.
  - c. We each are responsible to build one another up the most holy faith, keep ourselves in the love of God, and be merciful to those who are doubting or caught up in error.
3. Any teaching, however plausible it may sound, that encourages and permits us to sin is a false doctrine that must be rejected.
  4. Are you studying God's word so that you can contend earnestly for the faith? Are you actively seeking to build up your brothers and sisters in the faith? Are you keeping yourself in the love of God? Are you helping those who are doubting or caught up in error?



## CONTINUING IN GOD'S WILL

*“And This Is The Will Of God...”*

### Introduction

1. Before we became Christians, we did pretty much what WE wanted; as Peter says:

*“For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries” (1 Peter 4:3 NASB)*

2. This is not to say that we engage in all these practices, nor are we to think that this is a complete list. We each know what we used to be like, and each of us could probably draw up a unique profile of our former character and behavior.

3. Now, having heard the gospel of our salvation, we are new creatures, created in Christ Jesus to walk in newness of life. But for some, obeying the gospel is the end! And their thinking goes something like this: *“I have obeyed the gospel, I have done the will of God, and as long as I partake of the Lord's Supper each week I am saved”*.

4. In this lesson we will show that:

- a. Becoming a Christian is not the end of our responsibility toward God but the beginning.
- b. Becoming a Christian does not mean you have done the will of God but have just begun to do it.

### I. THE NECESSITY OF CONTINUING IN THE WILL OF GOD

A. The parable of the new babe in Christ.

1. Matthew 21:28-31.
2. Only the Christian who DOES the will of God will be saved.

B. The two stewards.

1. Luke 12:42-48.
2. Only the Christian who CONTINUES in the will of God will be saved.

C. Who is the true disciple?

1. Jesus' brothers and sisters are those who DO God's will (Mark 3:35).
2. Only those who ABIDE in Jesus' words are true disciples (John 8:31).
3. Paul exhorted new Christians to *“CONTINUE in the faith”* (Acts 14:21-22).
4. God's goodness toward us is conditional upon CONTINUANCE in the will of God (Romans 11:22).

### II. WHAT IS GOD'S WILL FOR US?

A. That we grow in knowledge (2 Peter 3:18).

1. Knowledge is essential for continued renewal (Colossians 3:10).
2. Continuing in study is essential to know the truth (2 Timothy 3:7).
3. Spiritual maturity is only attainable through knowledge (2 Peter 1:3) since it is through knowledge that we escaped the pollutions of the world in the first place (2 Peter 2:20).

B. Our sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:1-4).

1. Christ gave His life for us that we might be sanctified (Ephesians 1:4; 5:25-27).
2. It is in reference to our conduct that we must be holy (1 Peter 1:13-16).
3. We can only become holy through knowledge of God's word (John 17:17).
4. Right knowledge produces right conduct (Colossians 1:9-10).

C. That we mature.

1. Maturity comes through God's word (2 Timothy 3:15-16; 2 Peter 1:2).
2. Christ gave "gifts" to the church that we might mature (Ephesians 4:11-15).
3. Growth and maturity are essential that we might appear blameless before God at the judgement bar (Colossians 1:28).

D. That we be zealous for good works.

1. God created us in Christ Jesus for good works (Ephesians 2:10; Titus 2:14).
2. A knowledge of God's word thoroughly furnishes us unto all good works (2 Timothy 3:15-16).
3. Those then, who believe in God "*should be careful to maintain good works*" (Titus 3:8).
4. One of the reasons we assemble is to "*provoke one another to good works*" (Hebrews 10:24).

E. "*For the work of the ministry*".

1. We study at home and we are edified when we assemble that we might become knowledgeable and mature enough to serve other (Ephesians 4:12).
2. All Christians are expected to teach others (Hebrews 5:12).

**Summary**

1. Becoming a Christian is just the beginning of our new life in Christ, who died for us that we might CONTINUE in the will of God and be found blameless on that day.
2. If we genuinely desire to continue in the will of God then we will...
  - a. CONTINUE to grow in knowledge.
  - b. CONTINUE to pursue holiness.
  - c. CONTINUE to strive for maturity.
  - d. CONTINUE to be zealous for good works.
  - e. CONTINUE to minister and teach others.

Read Hebrews 10:35-29.

2 Timothy 2:2 (Teach).

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (Works)

2 Peter 1:3 (Maturity)

John 17:17 (Sanctification)

2 Peter 3:18 (Knowledge)

## COUNTING THE COST

### Introduction

1. Jesus tells us that we ought to sit down and count the cost of being a disciple (Luke 14:28-33).
2. Let us look and see what that cost could be.

### I. THE COST TO OURSELVES

- A. It may be that we will suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12).
- B. We must be willing to confess the name of Jesus before men (Matthew 10:32-33).
- C. Money and possessions are at the Lord's disposal (Acts 2:44-45).
- D. Becoming a Christian could mean the loss of our job.

### II. FAMILY AND FRIENDS

- A. Our love for God must be greater than that for our relatives (Luke 14:26).
- B. As believers, we are not to be equally yoked together with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

### III. THE WORLD

- A. We are not to love the world (1 John 2:15-17).
- B. We are to keep ourselves unspotted from the world (James 1:27).

### IV. A HIGH COST BUT GREATER PROMISES

- A. Basics of life provided (Matthew 6:31-33).
- B. Gain many brothers and sisters (Luke 18:29-30).
- C. Fellowship with the Father (1 John 1:3).
- D. Forgiveness of sins (1 John 1:9).
- E. We have eternal life (1 John 2:25).

### Conclusion

1. Following Jesus may cost us a great deal in this life, but the promises we have are far greater than anything we might lose physically.
2. All this being so, let us devote ourselves more fully to spiritual things.



# COVETOUSNESS

## *Finding the Cure*

### Introduction

1. Both the Old and New Testaments contain many warnings against covetousness (Exodus 20:17; Romans 13:9), but many are unclear as to its meaning and have a faulty understanding.
2. The English word *covet* only appears four times in the Old Testament (KJV): twice in Exodus 20:17 and once in Deuteronomy 5:21, where it is included among the Ten Commandments. It is also used in Micah 2:2 of wicked men who covet others property. The Hebrew word (for covet) is *chamad* [2530], and it means, “*to desire lust after, to covet*” (Vine); it appears twenty nine times in the Old Testament.
3. In the four verses mentioned above (Exodus 20:17; Deuteronomy 5:21; Micah 2:2) the noun *chamad* is used in a negative context. This might lead one to suppose that all coveting is wrong. But this is far from true as it is also found in a positive context e.g., in Psalms 19:10 where David says that the judgments of God are to be desired more than Gold; and in Psalms 68:16, David speaks of the hills that God desires to dwell in. Therefore, to covet, in and of itself, is not sinful. We must, then, determine what things are and are not to be coveted.
4. In this study, it is not my intention to list lawful and unlawful things or to draw lines or lay down rules; this is the individual's responsibility. However, there are certain Biblical principles that will bring our desires into the proper perspective. This will make the identification of inordinate desires easier and help us to focus on legitimate desires.
5. Outline:
  - a. Desire things that are in harmony with God's will.
  - b. Do not desire things to satisfy the flesh.
  - c. Cultivate godliness and contentment.

### **I. DESIRE THINGS IN HARMONY WITH GOD'S WILL (Luke 22:42; John 4:34; 5:30; Romans 12:2; Ephesians 6:6; 1 Thessalonians 4:3)**

- A. A family life built on Biblical principles (1 Corinthians 11:1-3; Ephesians 5:22-6:4).
- B. Being a model citizen (Romans 13:1-7).
- C. Cultivating a mature spiritual man (1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18; Hebrews 6:1-3).

### **II. DO NOT DESIRE THINGS TO SATISFY YOUR OWN FLESH (Ephesians 2:3; James 4:3-6)**

- A. A Christian's relationship to God is affected when selfish desires dominate (James 4:3-6).
- B. By putting on the Lord we will not be making provision for the flesh (Romans 13:14).
- C. Christians desire even lawful things for the benefit of others (Galatians 5:13).

### **III. CULTIVATE GODLINESS AND CONTENTMENT (1 Timothy 2:2; 4:7-8; 6:6)**

- A. As our devotion to God increases, so we move further away from the world.
- B. Be content (Philippians 4:11; Hebrews 13:5; 1 Timothy 6:8; Luke 3:14).
- C. Contentment and godliness will extinguish selfish desires (1 Corinthians 13:11; 1 Peter 4:8; Galatians 5:16, 24).

*“The flame of desire that once burned so brightly, has been extinguished by the waters of contentment” (Quotes and Things, D. Collins).*

#### IV. ARE YOU CARNAL OR SPIRITUAL

##### A. A mind cluttered with worldly thinking.

“I want a new car, I want a new kitchen, I want a holiday, and I want lots and lots of lovely things” (Cp. Luke 12:15).

“I can tolerate shows with just a little bad language, and a little nudity, and a little violence, and a little blasphemy; and it has no effect on us at all, why? I even let my children watch those shows” (Cp. 1 Corinthians 5:6; Galatians 5:9).

“If I had a million pounds this is what I would do with it...” (Cp. 1 Timothy 6:9-11).

“A couple of lottery tickets and the odd raffle ticket, you can't say that's gambling” (Cp. 1 Thessalonians 4:11; Proverbs 28:8).

“Wouldn't it be nice to have two wives!” (Cp. Matthew 19:5-6).

##### B. Think on these things (Philippians 4:8).

“What good thing can I do for my spouse?” (Cp. 1 Corinthians 7:33-34).

“The Lord will provide all that I need in life” (Cp. Matthew 6:33).

“The Lord has blessed me with more than I deserve already” (Cp. Hebrews 13:5).

“How can I help my brother?” (Cp. 1 Peter 3:8).

“I can give any spare money I have to the poor” (Cp. Ephesians 4:28).

“I hope to be a pastor one day” (Cp. 1 Timothy 3:1).

#### Conclusion

*“That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:22-24)*

1. When our desires are focused on the things of God, inordinate desires are extinguished.
2. There are many harmful desires that may arise in the heart, giving rise to many foolish questions which clutter the mind. As a result, Bible study, prayer, praise, personal witness, and good works all begin to wane.
3. In order to avoid this demise, let us exercise godliness with contentment, which will be of great gain. Let us also focus our affections and desires on spiritual things. In so doing, we shall quench the blaze of harmful desires.

## **D.N.A.**

*Direct Command, Necessary Inference, Apostolically Approved Example*

### **Introduction**

1. For Christians there is only one source of authority - the Bible. When we look into God's word we discover that there is a pattern that we must follow in worship and living.
2. In the Bible we find that we must have authority for all that we do (Colossians 3:17). This authority is derived in three different ways: by a **D**irect command, a **N**ecessary inference, and an **A**postolically approved example. This lesson will show this to be so.

### **I. WE MUST HAVE AUTHORITY**

- A. Authority For All We Do (Colossians 3:17).
- B. Not to add or takeaway from word (Deuteronomy 4:2).
- C. Abide in the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9).

### **II. DIRECT COMMAND**

- A. "*Sing*" is a direct command (Ephesians 5:19).
- B. "*Wives submit to your husbands*" is a direct command (Ephesians 5:22).
- C. "*Children, obey your parents*" is a direct command (Ephesians 6:1).

### **III. NECESSARY INFERENCE**

- A. The command to meet infers a meeting place (Acts 20:7).
- B. The command to sing infers the use of song books (Ephesians 5:19).
- C. The command to go and preach infers the use of transportation (Mark 16:15-16).

### **IV. APPROVED EXAMPLE**

- A. Letters of recommendation are approved by example (1 Corinthians 16:3).
- B. Gathering the church to report on work done (Acts 14:26-27).
- C. Lord's Supper, an approved example (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

### **V. NOAH AND THE BUILDING OF THE ARK (Genesis 6:8-16)**

- A. "Make thee an ark" is generic (Genesis 6:14). Noah could have used his own designs and materials.
- B. But the design and materials were specified (Genesis 6:14-16).
- C. The use of tools is inferred in the command to "*make*" (Genesis 6:14).

### **VI. GO AND PREACH (Matthew 28:18-20)**

- A. The command to go is generic (Matthew 28:19), allowing all forms of transport.
- B. They were told specifically who to teach - all nations (Matthew 28:19).
- C. They were told specifically what to teach - all things I have commanded you (Matthew 28:20).
- D. How to teach is generic, and so any method may be employed.

### **Conclusion**

1. It is obvious to the Christian that we need authority for whatever we do in religion.

2. We have seen that there are three ways to establish this authority; a direct command, necessary inference, and an approved example (D.N.A).
3. Some may try to establish authority based on the silence of the scriptures! However, this is surely condemned on the principle of not adding or taking away from the word?
4. Therefore, let us be certain that we have authority for all that we do.



## DO NOT LOVE THE WORLD

*An Exposition of 1John 2:15-17*

### Introduction

1. John begins this section with the simple imperative, “*Do not love the world*”.
  - a. The word *love* is from the Greek word *agape* (26) and denotes “*direction of the will and intelligent, purposeful choice*” (Lenski).
  - b. The love here, then, does not denote *affection* as there is a different Greek word (*phileo*) to denote such.
2. The object of this prohibition is “*...the world*”.
  - a. The word *world* refers to i) the physical world (Acts 17:24), ii) by metonymy, all the people that inhabit the earth (Matthew 5:14), iii) the maxims, aims, and principles by which unregenerate men live (1 John 2:15).
  - b. It is in the latter sense that John uses the word here.
3. In this lesson we shall consider...
  - a. The world we are forbidden to love.
  - b. The specific *things* in the world that John has in mind.
  - c. The effect that loving the world has on our relationship with God.
  - d. The eternal implications of loving the world.

### I. IMPERATIVE - LOVE NOT THE WORLD NOR THE THINGS IN THE WORLD

#### A. What does it mean to *love the world*?

1. It means having an attitude that approves of ungodly principles and conforms to them:

“A ‘love of the world’ is descriptive of an unregenerate man’s attitude toward the ungodly principles by which his contemporaries are governed. That such an attitude prevails is evidenced by the fact that he himself conforms to them” (*Quotes & Things*, Commentary, D. Collins)

“*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*)

2. Such people (the majority) are under the sway of Satan:

“*And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one*” (*1 John 5:19*)

#### B. What are the *things* in the world that we are not to love? These are referred to in the next verse as the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Barnes comments...

“...we are not to love the things which are sought merely to pamper the appetite, to please the eye, or to promote pride in living. These are the objects sought by the people of the world; these are not the objects to be sought by the Christian” (Barnes).

1. The lust of the flesh. This refers to unbridled lusts of the flesh:

“*Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God*” (*Galatians 5:19-21*)

2. The lust of the eyes. This may be summed up in one word, ‘covetousness’; a desire to have an abundance:

*“And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15)*

3. The pride of life. This refers to pride in one's achievements, possessions, heritage, and a vain assurance in one's own resources.

*“For I was envious at the arrogant as I behold the life of the wicked. For they die, not emancipated and weakened by disease, but peacefully and without fear. They are free from troubles and calamities as are common to other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore they were pride like a gold chain, and they were violence like a coat. Their countenance is changed with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walks through the earth. Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High? Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency” (Psalms 73:3-13)*

- C. The *things* in the world do not originate with the Father but the world.

## II. DENOTING – THE LOVE OF THE FATHER IS NOT IN HIM

- A. If one's attitude is sympathetic toward the principles of the world then a love of the father is not in that one.

1. One's love of the world leads to an obedience to the principles of the world.
2. One's love of the Father leads to an obedience to the commandments of God.

*“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3)*

- B. If we love the world then...

1. We make ourselves an enemy of God.

*“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4)*

2. There can be no compromise.

*“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24)*

- C. If we let our love with the world develop it will lead to apostasy, e.g., Demas:

*“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)*

## III. IMPLICATION – THE WORLD IS PASSING AWAY, AND ALSO IT'S LUSTS

- A. Passing away:

1. It is not the physical world in view here but the *form* or *fashion* of it:

*“And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passes away” (1 Corinthians 7:31)*

2. Those things that are the objects of our lusts will also pass away. It is men that lust and the implication is that those who love the world will also pass away.

- B. However, the one in whom the love of God resides, i.e., the one who does the will or keeps the commandments of God will live forever.

*“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” (John 11:25-26)*

*“Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?” (James 2:5)*

## **Conclusion**

### 1. The Christian’s responsibility:

- a. God has called us out of the world to be separate from the world (2 Corinthians 6:14-16).
- b. We cannot literally leave the world (1 Corinthians 5:10).
- c. But we are required to live godly lives while in it (Titus 2:12)...
- d. and keep ourselves unspotted by the world (James 1:27; 2 Corinthians 7:1)...
- e. and shine as lights in the world (Philippians 2:15).

### 2. The seeker’s responsibility:

- a. Peter exhorts seekers to save themselves from this perverse generation - whose end is destruction - (Acts 2:40).
- b. The salvation of which Peter speaks is only possible due to the work of Christ (Galatians 1:4).
- c. Loving obedience is necessary to this end (Hebrews 5:9)...
- d. Obedience to the gospel (Romans 6:17; 10:16).

*“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 2:37-38)*

### 3. Consequences:

- a. Disobedience will end in destruction (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9).
- b. Obedience and faithfulness leads to eternal life (Jude 1:21).



## DOES IT MATTER WHAT YOU BELIEVE?

### Introduction

1. Over the years, I've studied with many people from various denominational backgrounds, and there are several statements that crop up again and again. One of these is, *"It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are sincere."*
2. In this lesson, we shall answer the question, *"Does it matter what you believe?"*

### I. DOES IT MATTER WHAT YOU BELIEVE?

#### A. Doctrines that matter:

1. Does it matter whether or not you believe Jesus is 'I AM'? There are many who do believe Jesus is 'I AM' but there are also those who doubt such a doctrine. Let us hear what Jesus Himself says:

*"I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins: for if you do not believe that **I am**, you shall die in your sins" (John 8:24)*

- a. It is clear from this passage that what we believe about Jesus determines the state in which we die.
  - b. There are many people in other religions who sincerely believe that Jesus was *just a man*, but sincerely believing a lie does not save... it kills (See Genesis 3:1-24 [Adam & Eve]; 1 Kings 13:1-26 [The man of God]).
2. Does it matter whether or not I believe the resurrection has past or not? Paul, in his letter to Timothy, writes:

*"But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some" (2 Timothy 2:16-18)*

- a. Paul instructs Timothy to *"shun profane and vain babblings"*. He then names Hymenaeus and Philetus as examples of those whose teachings are *"profane and vain babblings"*. They were teaching that *"the resurrection is already past"*. But, surely, it doesn't matter what we believe, does it?
  - b. Of those who believe and teach false doctrine, whether sincere or not, Paul says, they have *"strayed from the truth."* He says, too, that their doctrine is like a cancer that can *"overthrow the faith of some."* Paul certainly seemed to think it mattered what we believe.
3. There are those who sincerely believe that certain ones should not marry? There are others who believe that we should abstain from meats? Does it matter as long as we believe in Jesus? Surely that's the main thing? The inspired apostle Paul warned Timothy saying:

*"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth" (1 Timothy 4:1-3)*

- a. *"...in latter times some shall depart from the faith."* In what way would they *"depart from the faith"*? In *"giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils."* And what are these *"doctrines of devils"*? Paul lists two things: *"Forbidding to marry,"* and, *"Commanding to abstain from meats."* Does it matter if I believe doctrines of devils? The Scriptures say, Yes, it does matter.
- b. Those who believe false doctrine, regardless of how sincere they *appear*, are said to *"speak lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron."* Are you concerned about what you believe?

4. There are many today who believe we ought to keep the Law of Moses. In Paul's day, these were called "*the party of the circumcision*" (Galatians 2:12 NASB). The term *circumcision* this doesn't mean they just believed in circumcision. They themselves explain, "*It is necessary to circumcise them [Gentiles] and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses*" (Acts 15:5). But did it really matter as long as they believed in Jesus? The inspired apostle Paul thought it mattered and expressed it so in the strongest possible terms...

*"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).

- a. Paul reminds these brethren that, when they became Christians, they were freed from the Law of Moses; referring to it as "*the yoke of bondage.*" He warns them that, if they submit to circumcision, "*Christ shall profit you nothing.*" And that, their obligation would not end at circumcision but that they would be debtors to the whole Law. The most solemn warning of all is that, those who seek to follow the Law are "*fallen from grace.*"

- b. Does anyone really want to believe this false doctrine and be marked as one "*fallen from grace*"?

5. Does it matter if I believe the lies of Satan? Adam and Eve did and it cost them dearly (Genesis 3:1-7, 16).

- B. Another thing we should consider is, if it doesn't matter what we believe, why, in the Scriptures, are there so many warnings to be on one's guard against false teachers? Consider the following passages (Matthew 7:15; 2 Corinthians 11:3; 2 Corinthians 11:26; Galatians 2:4).

*"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world"* (1 John 4:1)

*"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be **false teachers** among you, who privily shall bring in **damnable heresies**, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction"* (2 Peter 2:1)

## Conclusion

1. Many minimize the importance of doctrine saying, "*It doesn't matter what you believe.*" This, no doubt, is in an attempt to justify the existence of the hundreds of denominations divided in doctrine. But it is important what we believe because, as we have seen:
- a. If a person does not believe that Jesus is the great 'I AM' then that one will die in their sin (John 8:24).
- b. If our doctrine is not according to the Scriptures then we have strayed from the truth and may even overthrow the faith of others (2 Timothy 2:16-18).
- c. If we consider doctrine unimportant then our beliefs may very well be Satanic in origin (1 Timothy 4:1-3).
- d. If we believe 'another gospel' then we have fallen from grace (Galatians 5:1-4).
- e. If we believe the lies of Satan we will lose our lives (Genesis 3:1-24; 1 Kings 13:1-26).
2. If it doesn't matter what we believe then Jesus, Peter, Paul, and John were wasting their breath warning men to be on their guard against false teachers (Matthew 7:15; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 4:1).

*"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 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: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ"* (Ephesians 4:11-15)

## DOES YOUR RELIGION MATTER?

### Introduction

1. On a recent television program hosted by James Whale, the question was asked, “*Does it really matter what religion you belong to as long as you worship God?*” This question was put to an audience made up of Jews, Hindu's, Muslim's, and those from varying 'Christian' denominations. With the exception of one evangelical preacher, they all answered, “*No, it doesn't matter what religion you belong to as long as you are worshipping God in all sincerity*”. Is it possible that God's elect have such an attitude?
2. In this lesson, we show that belonging to right religion is essential.

### I. ASSUMPTIONS

Things we have to assume if your religious affiliation is unimportant.

- A. God has given us no revelation of Himself.
- B. God is unknowable.
- C. No one religion is right, they are all man made.
- D. Jesus was just another prophet.

### II. ELIJAH'S CHALLENGE (1 Kings 18:21)

- A. “*How long will you waver between two opinions?*”
- B. “*If the Lord is God, follow Him; But if Baal is god, follow him*”.
- C. God offered evidence of His existence and established Elijah as a true prophet.
- D. God has left evidence of His existence in all ages (Psalms 19:1-4 > Romans 1:20).

### III. WHICH GOD SHALL WE WORSHIP?

- A. The Zoroastrian god consisting of seven spirits whose name is Amesha-Spentas.
- B. The Hindu god consisting of hundreds of gods whose name is Brahma.
- C. The Muslim's one god called Allah.
- D. Unless God reveals Himself we cannot know what we worship.

### IV. WHICH HOLY BOOK?

- A. Which scriptures are from God?
  1. All of them? (They all conflict in their teachings on the nature of God, worship, and the way of salvation).
  2. None of Them? (This just takes us back to square one).
  3. One of them? (This seems the most reasonable).
- B. Some marks of identification.
  1. The Bible is unique (In its preparation, brevity, circulation, and survival).
  2. The Bible is free from error (Being historically, geographically, and scientifically accurate).
  3. The witness of fulfilled prophecy.

## V. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

A. God has given us revelation (internal claims made valid after examining the evidence that the Bible is God's Word).

1. What Paul wrote were the Lord's commands (1 Corinthians 14:37).
2. Peter acknowledged Paul's writings as scripture (2 Peter 3:16).
3. All scripture is God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16).

B. He is a God who may be known.

1. Paul preached about God to the Athenians whom they had previously not known (Acts 17:16-31).
2. All that are in God's kingdom know Him (Hebrews 8:11).
3. We know Him if we obey His commands (1 John 2:3-4).

C. One way.

1. There is only one faith (Ephesians 4:5).
2. No other name by which we can be saved (Jesus) (Acts 4:12).
3. Jesus is the Way (John 10:8 > 14:6).

D. Not just a prophet.

1. A prophet who must be listened to (Acts 3:22; ref. Deuteronomy 18:15).
2. A prophet who is the Son of God (Matthew 3:21-22).
3. A prophet who claimed to be God (John 8:58; 10:30-33).

### Conclusion

1. God has spoken to man through the Bible, the inspired Word of God, and has revealed Himself in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus was more than a prophet: He was the Word made flesh, and declared that He is the only way.
2. As we have shown all these things can only be true if the Bible is the Word of God; but it is own our shoulders to be able to show that it is.

*“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope you have” (1 Peter 3:15)*



# DRINKING

## Introduction

1. It has always been traditional for Christians not to indulge in drinking. By “*drinking*” we mean anything that contains alcohol.
2. What does the Bible teach about drinking?

## I. DRUNKENNESS CONDEMNED

- A. Do not be drunk with wine.

*“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18)*

- B. Walk honestly.

*“Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying” (Romans 13:13)*

## II. IS IT A SIN TO HAVE A DRINK?

- A. Drunkenness condemned (Romans 5:18).
- B. Not to be *given* to wine (Titus 1:7).
- C. Timothy instructed to drink a little wine for medicinal purposes (1 Timothy 5:23).

## III. A DIFFERENCE IN STRENGTH

- A. Today’s wine is far stronger than were those of Palestine:

*“The liquors of this land in the strength of their intoxicating properties differ so widely from the wines of Palestine, that even the most moderate use of them seem immoderate in comparison” (McGarvey, Fourfold Gospel).*

- B. Another quote from a forgotten source!

*“Fermented wines which however were unlike our fiery liquors and contained only a small percent of alcohol. These mixed with two or three parts water. The fermented wine at first mild, and then diluted with water, was a drink as used that had no intoxicating power, unless used in enormous quantities.”*

## IV. GOOD REASONS TO ABSTAIN

- A. Physical complaints:

1. Gastritis.
2. Peptic Ulcerations.
3. Sclerosis of the liver.
4. Inflammation of the pancreas.
5. Damage to the heart muscles.

- B. Mental complaints:

1. Loss of understanding and balance judgment.
2. Severe depression with marked guilt feelings, which sometimes end in suicide.

- C. Social and economic - Once a person becomes an alcoholic he/she may lose their job, friends, and family, and may even end up in the gutter (Proverbs 23:21).
- D. Moral and spiritual effects:
  - 1. Misadministration of justice.
  - 2. Provokes anger.
  - 3. Contentions.
  - 4. Brawling
  - 5. Deadens the spiritual sensibilities and produces a callous indifference to religious influences.
  - 6. Destroys all serious thought (Isaiah 5:12).

**Conclusion**

- 1. The Bible teaches us not to get drunk.
- 2. However, this does not give license to indulge in the wines, spirits, and beers of today, as there is a vast difference in strength. In addition, when we consider the damage done to body and soul, we advise abstinence.

## ENCOUNTERING TRIALS

### Introduction

1. Jesus is the Supreme example of what it means to suffer for the sake of good.
2. Suffering for good will most certainly come our way and the Bible tells us of the attitude of mind we all should have when it does come.

### I. BE PREPARED

- A. Living godly will bring persecution (2 Timothy 3:12).
- B. We ought to be ready to suffer (1 Peter 4:1).
- C. Paul had this attitude (Acts 20:22-23).

### II. TRIALS COME IN VARIOUS FORMS

- A. Physical suffering (1 Peter 4:1).
- B. Temptation (James 1:13-14).
- C. Consider Paul's trials (2 Corinthians 11:23-27).

### III. REASON FOR TRIALS

- A. To test our faith (James 1:3, Genesis 22:12).
- B. To produce character (James 1:3; Romans 5:3-4, 15:4).

### IV. JOY IN BOTH WORLDS

- A. Be Joyful when trials come (James 1:2).
- B. Be thankful to have been counted worthy (Acts 5:40-41).
- C. Results in praise, glory, and honor (1 Peter 1:7).
- D. Will receive a crown of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:6-8, Revelation 2:10).

### Conclusion

1. The scriptures teach us that trials will come to us.
2. Therefore, we can arm ourselves and be ready for when they do come. These trials may seem painful but they are for good reasons: to test our faith and refine us, and so we should be joyful that we have been counted worthy to suffer.



# ENDEAVORING TO KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

## *The Work of the Church*

### Introduction

1. Whether we are willing to admit it or not, there are divisions within the body of Christ. The responsibility of every individual is to “*keep the unity of the Spirit*” (Ephesians 4:3).
2. In this lesson will shall...
  - a. Highlight the divisions that exist among brethren in reference to the work of the church.
  - b. Examine what the Scriptures teach concerning the work of the church.
  - c. Point the way to unity.

### I. AGREEMENTS AND DISAGREEMENTS

#### A. Where brethren agree:

1. All brethren will agree that church has a responsibility to preach the gospel.

*“For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything” (1 Thessalonians 1:8 NASB)*

2. All brethren will agree that we have a responsibility to support evangelists.

*“You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs” (Philippians 4:15-16 NASB)*

*“Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge? I robbed other churches by taking wages from them to serve you; and when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so” (2 Corinthians 11:7-9 NASB)*

3. All brethren will agree that the church is to support its needy brethren.

*“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the first day [Sunday] of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come. When I arrive, whoever you may approve, I will send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem” (1 Corinthians 16:1-3 NASB)*

*“But now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem” (Romans 15:25-26 NASB)*

#### B. Where brethren differ:

1. In reference to **evangelism**, brethren disagree over the methods employed:

- a. The missionary society. This is a society or organization that selects, sends out, and supports evangelists. It is funded by individuals and congregations.
- b. The sponsoring church. A particular congregation that acts as a missionary society.

2. In reference to **benevolence**, brethren disagree over the recipients of support. In addition to supporting needy saints, many believe that...

- a. Non Christians may receive help from the church.
- b. Donations may be sent to other organizations that support the needy.

## II. SCRIPTURAL

### A. The local church:

- 1. Each church is autonomous. This is seen in the fact that elders were appointed in each local church (Acts 14:23; 1 Peter 5:1-3).
- 2. A local church is authorized to preach (1 Thessalonians 1:8), teach (Ephesians 4:11-12), and support its needy members (Acts 6:1-6).

### B. We have already seen that we call agree on certain points:

- 1. One or several churches may send support to a preacher (Philippians 4:14-16). One or several churches may send aid to a church that has needy saints (Romans 15:25-26; 1 Corinthians 16:1-3; Acts 11:27-30).
- 2. But we cannot find examples of...
  - a. A missionary society or a sponsoring church doing the work of a local church. Such an arrangement violates autonomy because the local church is then depending on another organization to do its work.
  - b. In regards to the specific work of benevolence, we see that all the recipients of such were Christians.

## III. WORKING AROUND OUR DISAGREEMENTS

### A. We often here these slogans...

“Where the Bible speaks we speak and where it is silent we are silent”

“We must have book, chapter, and verse for all that we do”

“Do all by the authority of Christ”

### B. If we believe these slogans, then unity can be maintained if we only employ those methods on which we both agree.

## Conclusion

- 1. All brethren agree that the work of the church is to evangelize, teach, and support the needy.
- 2. Divisions arise over methods but these can be avoided if we agree to stick to those methods and arrangements we can see in the Scriptures.

## ENTICEMENTS

### Introduction

1. Many religious groups these days are offering various kinds of enticements in order to fill their meeting halls, and, sad to say, the same is true among churches of Christ to lure people along to meetings with worldly enticements.
2. Is it right to use enticements? This lesson will look at some that are used and then see what the Bible has to say.

### I. WORLDLY ENTICEMENTS

- A. Food: tea and biscuits on arrival, lunch after worship, picnics in the park, coffee mornings, etc. All organized and paid for out of the churches' treasury.
- B. Entertainment: choirs, live bands, plays, celebrity speakers, etc.
- C. Conforming to the world: licensed bars, cafés, etc.
- D. Permissiveness: women preachers, homosexuals, etc.
- E. Doctrine: whatever you believe is fine, there is no false doctrine.
- F. Vacations: adult and children's Bible camps.

### II. DID JESUS ENTICE PEOPLE WITH MIRACLES?

- A. Jesus grew great crowds as a result of His preaching (Matthew 4:23-5:2; 14:13-14; 34-36; 15:29-31).
- B. The purpose of the miracles was to confirm the word (Acts 2:22; Mark 16:19-20; Hebrews 2:1-4).
- C. Some were following to be filled but Jesus rebuked them for this (John 6:26).

### III. PAUL'S ENTICEMENTS (1 Corinthians 2:1-4)

- A. Not with excellency of speech (1 Corinthians 2:1).
- B. Not with excellency of wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:1).
- C. I was with you in weakness (1 Corinthians 2:3).
- D. I was with you in fear (1 Corinthians 2:3).
- E. I was with you in much trembling (1 Corinthians 2:3).
- F. My speech and preaching were not with enticing words (1 Corinthians 2:4).
- G. I knew nothing among you except "*Jesus Christ and Him crucified*" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

### Conclusion

1. There are many religious groups trying to fill their meeting halls by the use of worldly enticements.
2. The only enticement that the apostle Paul knew was *Jesus Christ and Him crucified*. We shall end with two verses....

*"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day" (John 6:44)*

*"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me" (John 12:32)*





## EVERYDAY RELIGION

### Introduction

*“The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Stand in the gate of the LORD'S house and proclaim there this word and say, 'Hear the word of the LORD, all you of Judah, who enter by these gates to worship the LORD!' Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place. Do not trust in deceptive words, saying, 'This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.' For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly practice justice between a man and his neighbor, if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, nor walk after other gods to your own ruin, then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever. Behold, you are trusting in deceptive words to no avail. Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery and swear falsely, and offer sacrifices to Baal and walk after other gods that you have not known, then come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, 'We are delivered!'--that you may do all these abominations? Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your sight? Behold, I, even I, have seen it, declares the LORD. But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I made My name dwell at the first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel. And now, because you have done all these things, declares the LORD, and I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, but you did not hear, and I called you but you did not answer, therefore, I will do to the house which is called by My name, in which you trust, and to the place which I gave you and your fathers, as I did to Shiloh. I will cast you out of My sight, as I have cast out all your brothers, all the offspring of Ephraim. As for you, do not pray for this people, and do not lift up cry or prayer for them, and do not intercede with Me; for I do not hear you. Do you not see what they are doing in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead dough to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and they pour out drink offerings to other gods in order to spite Me. Do they spite Me? declares the LORD. Is it not themselves they spite, to their own shame? Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, My anger and My wrath will be poured out on this place, on man and on beast and on the trees of the field and on the fruit of the ground; and it will burn and not be quenched. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices and eat flesh. For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. But this is what I commanded them, saying, 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you will be My people; and you will walk in all the way which I command you, that it may be well with you.' Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked in their own counsels and in the stubbornness of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward. Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have sent you all My servants the prophets, daily rising early and sending them. Yet they did not listen to Me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck; they did more evil than their fathers. You shall speak all these words to them, but they will not listen to you; and you shall call to them, but they will not answer you. You shall say to them, 'This is the nation that did not obey the voice of the LORD their God or accept correction; truth has perished and has been cut off from their mouth. 'Cut off your hair and cast it away, And take up a lamentation on the bare heights; For the LORD has rejected and forsaken The generation of His wrath'” (Jeremiah 7:1-29 NASB)*

1. Many people think that a life devoted to serving God is going to church on Sunday and going through required acts of worship.
2. Such things are really only a part of devotion and service to God, but it is easy to fall into the trap of feeling safe and secure because we belong to the right church and go through all the required acts of worship.
3. This lesson explains and reminds us of what true devotion and service to God is.

## **I. A WORTHLESS RELIGION**

- A. These people felt that going to the temple was religion (Jeremiah 7:4).
- B. These people were living evil lives (Jeremiah 7:9), but still said, "*We are safe*" (Jeremiah 7:10).
- C. But God said, "*I have been watching you*" (Jeremiah 7:11).

## **II. THEIR PUNISHMENT**

- A. The people would not listen to God (Jeremiah 7:27).
- B. They are now under His wrath (Jeremiah 7:29).
- C. In 588 BC, Jerusalem was besieged and everything destroyed (2 Kings 25:1-30).

## **III. TRUE RELIGION**

- A. All offerings of worship must be from the heart (Joshua 24:14).
- B. Worship must also be in truth (John 4:24).
- C. Our daily lives also must be in truth (2 Corinthians 1:12; Ephesians 4:17-23).

## **Conclusion**

1. Each of us ought to examine himself to see whether he is walking in the truth. We ought not to deceive ourselves thinking we are safe to sin because we belong to the church of Christ and go through the required acts of worship.
2. In all areas of our life, we ought to live in consistently trying to please God in all that we do.

# FAITHFUL UNTIL DEATH

*Demonstrating Your Commitment*

## Introduction

*“Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10 NASB)*

*“I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!” (Luke 12:4-5 NASB)*

*“Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up” (Daniel 3:16-18 NASB)*

### 1. Suffering, fear, and commitment:

- a. The first Scripture is a warning from Jesus to the Christians in Smyrna not to fear what they are about to suffer because of their faith, and He encourages them with the promise that those who are faithful until death will receive the crown of life.
- b. The second Scripture is a warning from Jesus to His disciples not to be afraid of those whose can kill the body but to fear God who has the power to kill both body and soul.
- c. The third Scripture is an example of three young men whose commitment to God was put to the ultimate test. The king had commanded that everyone in his kingdom should bow down and worship the image he had set up, but these three young men refused to do so. They knew God had the power to deliver them but could not be certain that He would, and whether He delivered them or not, they would not bow in worship to the image.

### 2. The question we need to ask ourselves is, “Do I have that kind of commitment?” I hope to help you answer that question in this lesson.

## I. A GUIDING PRINCIPLE

A. Jesus once said, *“He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much” (Luke 16:10)*. Based on this principle we can say that if one cannot show commitment to God in the “*little things*” then we can be certain of failure when put to the ultimate test.

B. The apostle John draws on the same principle when discussing our love for the brethren...

*“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” (1 John 3:14-18 NASB)*

1. John states that Jesus demonstrated His love for us by laying down His life for us, and we ought to be willing to lay down our lives for the brethren, which would demonstrate our love for one another (1 John 3:16). But circumstances in our day, in this country, do not call for such a demonstration of love, and we might wonder whether we would lay down our lives for the brethren.

2. John argues that if we are willing to demonstrate the greatest love of all by laying down our lives for our brethren then we would certainly be willing to demonstrate our love for brethren in lesser ways by supplying what is needed for a brother in want (1 John 3:17). The point is this: if we do not have the lesser love for our brethren then we certainly don't have the greater love for our brethren.

## II. DEMONSTRATING OUR COMMITMENT

- A. Jesus demands a total commitment; He demands that we remain faithful in the face of persecution and tribulation and even until death. In this county, under the present circumstances, it is unlikely that our commitment to Jesus will be tried under the threat of death. This may cause us to ask ourselves, *"Do I have the kind of commitment to Jesus that will remain unshaken even in the face of death?"*
- B. The principle we have discussed will help us determine the answer to the question concerning our commitment. If we can demonstrate our commitment to Jesus in lesser ways (relatively speaking) then I believe we can have confidence that we will remain committed even in the face of death. So, how can we demonstrate our faithfulness to Jesus in lesser ways? Here are several ways you can demonstrate your commitment...

1. **By attending services.** Christians were committed to meeting on the first day of the week in accordance with the Lord's will to (i) break bread *"in remembrance of Me"* (Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24-25), (ii) give generously into the weekly collection (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7), (iii) edify one another in all that we do (1 Corinthians 14:26), and (iv) consider how we can provoke one another to love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24). This is the will of the Lord and if we are committed to doing His will then we will make every effort to attend services. It may mean making sacrifices, rescheduling, changing careers, etc. but the Lord sees all that we do and will reward us:

"On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight" (Acts 20:7)

- a. The rewards of our faithfulness actually come by our presence because the services are a source of edification, encouragement, comfort, and joy.
- b. Likewise, the losses we suffer in not attending actually come by our absence because we are cutting ourselves off from the source of edification, encouragement, comfort, and joy.

2. **By contributing generously into the treasury.** Christians were committed to the edification of the church, providing the needs of the saints, and the spread of the gospel in all the world. Certainly, these things must be done on an individual basis (Romans 15:2; James 1:27; Acts 8:4) but it is also the Lord's will that we work together as a church to do the same:

"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the first day [Sunday] of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come" (1 Corinthians 16:1-2)

- a. Corporate work:
  - 1) The church comes together for edification (1 Corinthians 14:26).
  - 2) The church sends relief to needy saints (1 Corinthians 16:1-3; Romans 15:26; Acts 11:27-30).
  - 3) The church sends out evangelists to preach the gospel (Acts 13:1-3) and sends support to other evangelists who preach the gospel (Philippians 4:15-16; 2 Corinthians 11:8-9; cp. 1 Corinthians 9:14).
- b. The money we contribute each week is essential to perform these works that the Lord has commanded the church to do. Your contribution helps to edify the church, provide for needy saints, and save souls. The last of these, saving souls, is the most important of these works. How precious is a soul?

*"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16 NASB)*

- c. The amount you contribute each week reflects your concern for the spiritual growth of your brethren, your love for needy brethren, and your love for the lost souls of men and women. It is God's will that each one of us contribute into the treasury each week to fulfill the work that God has given to this church and if we are committed to doing His will then we will make every effort to give generously and sacrificially. When we give sacrificially, generously, and cheerfully then this is a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God (Philippians 4:18). The Lord sees all and will reward us:

- 1) The Lord is watching...

*"And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. And He saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins. And He said, Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on" (Luke 21:1-4 NASB)*

- 2) The Lord will reward you...

*"Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account" (Philippians 4:17 NASB)*

*"Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully" (2 Corinthians 9:6 NASB)*

3. **By sharing your faith.** Christians were committed to sharing their faith in Christ with everyone with whom they came into contact (Acts 8:4; 18:24-26). Think for a moment about the number of people with whom you come into contact on a daily basis? (i) family and friends, (ii) fellow school and college students, (iii) work colleagues and associates, (iv) shop owners and assistants, and (v) people that you see every day through traveling; perhaps some are saved but the majority are probably lost. Do you share your faith with those who are lost? Do you have a love for the souls of men like Jesus (Luke 19:10; Ephesians 5:2; Galatians 2:20)? God desires that all men be saved (1 Timothy 2:3-4), do you? If you desire to demonstrate your commitment to the Lord then you can share your faith with people in several ways:

*"Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word" (Acts 8:4)*

- a. Whether you have been a Christian for one day or fifty years, you know enough to be able to share your faith with others. You know what you believe and you know what you did to be saved and you can share this with others.
- b. You can share your faith in two ways, either directly or indirectly:
- 1) By 'directly' I mean simply talking to others about the gospel.
- 2) By 'indirectly' I mean giving others a tract, inviting them to services, or arranging a study for them with someone else.
- c. Our commitment to the Lord is reflected in the efforts we make to share the gospel with others. If we have a sincere love for the Lord and the souls of men, then we will share our faith with everyone whom we come into contact, either directly or indirectly. This is the will of God who desires all men to be saved (1 Timothy 2:3-4). Sharing our faith with others can be nerve-racking, it may elicit persecution and ridicule, and it may mean losing a friend, but Jesus expects a full commitment in sharing the good news. Jesus warned, *"Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven. Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his household. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me"* (Matthew 10:32-38). But what reward is there for us if we are persecuted? What reward is there for us if we lose friends and family members?

1) To those who are persecuted and ridiculed...

*“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 5:10-12 NASB)*

2) To those who lose family and friends...

*“Jesus said, Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life” (Mark 10:29-30 NASB)*

**Conclusion**

1. Jesus exhorts all Christians to be faithful until death (Revelation 2:10) and some might ask, *“Do I really have the kind of commitment that will not fail even in the face of death?”*
2. Many here today are unlikely to have their commitment put to the test on that level. However, there is a Scriptural principle by which we can determine whether or not we have the kind of commitment that will stand even in the face of death. It is the principle that says ‘The lesser proves the greater.’ Thus, if we cannot demonstrate commitment to the Lord on levels that do not threaten our lives, then we certainly have no reason to believe that we will stand firm in our commitment in the face of death.
3. There are many ways that we can demonstrate our commitment to the Lord and we have considered just three ways in the lesson today: attending services, giving generously into the collection, and sharing our faith with the lost. Such commitments may mean making sacrifices, opening ourselves to ridicule, etc.
4. But whatever we sacrifice, whatever persecution we suffer, and whatever we lose, the Lord has given us great and precious promises that both motivate and offer hope.
5. If you are demonstrating your commitment to the Lord in these and other ways then you can be confident that your commitment will remain firm even in the face of death. If you seem to fall short then you can resolve, today, to begin demonstrating a greater commitment to the Lord. If you are not a Christian then you are urged to believe the gospel, repent of your sins, confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, be baptised for the remission of your sins, and begin a new life of faithfulness and commitment to the Lord.

## FIGURING THE ARK

### Introduction

1. The apostle Paul says, “*For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning...*” (Romans 15:4). From the Old Testament we learn of hope, patience, courage, and love, to name but a few things. There are also many types, figures and shadows which see their fulfillment in the New Testament (e.g., Hebrews 8:1-5).
2. In this lesson we will be looking at the story of Noah and the ark and seeing what figures might lie therein.

### I. LAMENTATIONS

#### A. The conditions of man.

1. Man's thoughts were continually evil (Genesis 6:5).
2. Man's ways were corrupt (Genesis 6:12).
3. Man was full of violence (Genesis 6:11).
4. The same condition will be prevalent in the last days (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

#### B. The judgment.

1. The Lord was grieved and filled with pain (Genesis 6:6 > Ephesians 4:29-32).
2. Complete destruction was decreed (Genesis 6:7a > 2 Peter 3:10-11a).
3. The whole creation suffered the consequences of sin (Genesis 6:7b; 13b).

#### C. The Longsuffering (self restraint in the face of provocation).

1. God gave man one hundred and twenty years to repent (Genesis 6:3; 1 Peter 3:20; cp. 2 Peter 2:5) e.g., Jezebel was given time to repent (Revelation 2:21).
2. God is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9; Ezekiel 18:31-32).
3. A tender picture of the Lord's desire is painted for us in Luke 13:34.

### II. SALVATION

#### A. There is a way...

1. God revealed His intentions and will through one who was righteous and blameless (Genesis 6:9 > Luke 3:21-22; 23:47; 1 Peter 2:22).
2. Noah was to be the builder of the ark (Genesis 6:14 > Matthew 16:18).
3. Noah and his family were to enter the ark (Genesis 6:18 > 1 Timothy 5:1; Matthew 23:8; Matthew 12:48-50).
4. Those in the ark were looking for a “*new heaven and a new earth*” (Genesis 7:4 > 2 Peter 3:13).

#### B. One way.

1. There was only one ark (Genesis 6:14 > Ephesians 1:22; 4:4).
2. There was only one builder and founder (Genesis 6:14; 22; cp. Hebrews 11:7).
3. They entered the ark through one door (Genesis 6:16 > John 10:7-9).
4. They were in the one light of truth (Genesis 6:16; 8:6; > [The light of truth] 1 John 1:5-7 - 2:7-11).
5. They were all one family (Genesis 6:18 > Ephesians 3:15; 1 John 3:1).
6. They all had one faith - They all believed the flood would come and they all believed that to be saved you had to be in the ark. This faith was seen by the building and entering the ark. (Titus 1:4; James 2:14-16).

7. They had one hope - To escape destruction and walk the earth again (Genesis 7:7 > Ephesians 4:4; Romans 8:22-25; 2 Corinthians 4:18).

C. Be careful to...

1. Listen to God (Genesis 6:13; 22; > Hebrews 1:1-2; John 12:49-50).
2. Follow the blueprint or pattern (Genesis 6:15 > 2 Timothy 1:13; 1 Corinthians 4:17).
3. Do everything God commands (Genesis 6:22; 7:5 > Matthew 28:19-20).

**Conclusion**

1. There is a day of judgment coming, though people carry on as if it is not coming, and God has provided a way of salvation for those who are righteous. This way of salvation was prefigured in the story of Noah and the ark: Noah heard the word of God, he believed the word and he obeyed it.
2. The very waters that destroyed the world carried Noah and his household to safety and as Peter says, *“This water symbolizes the baptism that now saves you”* (1 Peter 3:20-21).

*“And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all”* (Luke 17:26-27)

3. There is only one ship that is sailing to heaven so make sure you are on board with a valid ticket.



## FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

### Introduction

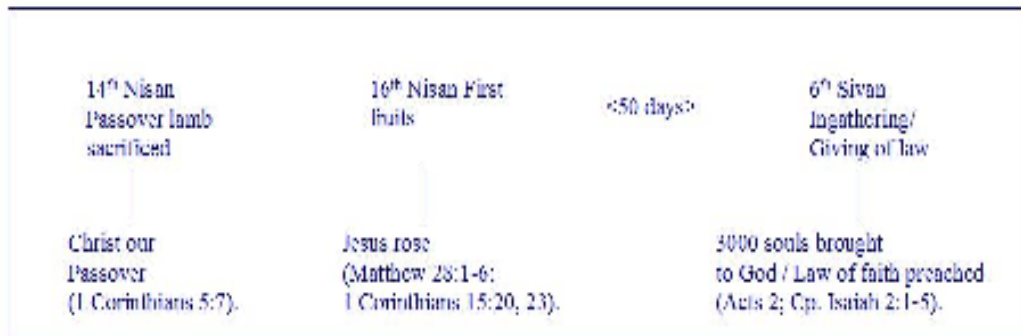
1. This lesson will be an exposition of Acts 2:1-4.
2. We will focus on the following points:
  - a. The day of Pentecost.
  - b. Those baptized in the Holy Spirit.
  - c. What it means to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. The groundwork for this lesson has already been laid by Jim Jonas in his lessons these past few weeks: **'The Person Of The Holy Spirit'** and **'The Divine Arranger Of The Godhead'**.

### I. THE MEANING OF PENTECOST

- A. The word Pentecost means 'fifty days', and was one of three annual feasts the Jews were required to frequent at Jerusalem.
  1. The feast of unleavened bread or Passover (Nisan 14-21).
  2. The feast of the harvest or first fruits (Nisan 16).
  3. The feast of the Ingathering, which fell on the fiftieth day after Nisan 16<sup>th</sup> (Sivan 6).

The Jewish Calendar					
The Jews used two kinds of calendars: Civil Calendar - official calendar of kings, childbirth and contracts. Sacred Calendar - from which festivals were computed.					
Names of Months	Corresponds with	Number of days	Month of civil year	Month of sacred year	
TISHRI	Sept.-Oct.	30 days	1 <sup>st</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	The Jewish day was from sunset to sunset in eight equal parts.  First watch.....Sunset - 9 PM. Second watch.....9PM - Midnight Third watch.....Midnight - 3AM Fourth watch.....3AM - Sunrise
HESHVAN	Oct.-Nov.	29 or 30	2 <sup>nd</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	
CHISLEV	Nov.-Dec.	29 or 30	3 <sup>rd</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	
TEBETH	Dec.-Jan.	29	4 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	
SHEBAT	Jan.-Feb.	30	5 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	-----  First watch.....Sunrise - 9AM Second watch.....9AM to Noon Third watch.....Noon - 3PM Fourth watch.....3PM - Sunset
ADAR	Feb.-Mar.	29 or 30	6 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	
NISAN	Mar.-Apr.	30	7 <sup>th</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	
IYAR	Apr.-May	29	8 <sup>th</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	
SIVAN	May-June	30	9 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	
TAMMUZ	June-July	29	10 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	
AB	July-Aug.	30	11 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	
*ELUL	Aug.-Sept.	29	12 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	
*Hebrew months were alternately 30 and 29 days long. Their year, shorter than ours, had 354 days. Therefore, about every 3 years (7 times in nineteen years an extra 29 day month VEADAR, was added between ADAR and NISAN.					

- B. This day, then, was essentially an agricultural celebration at which the first fruits were offered to God before the ingathering. It also, supposedly, was commemorative of the giving of the law at Mount Sinai.
- C. These three feasts have their New Testament fulfillment.



## II. WHO WAS BAPTIZED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT?

A. John the Baptist promised that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:8).

1. To who was this promise made? *“And all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him...”* (v.5).
2. Were all these baptized in the Holy Spirit? Of course not! This shows us that the promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was limited.

B. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was only promised to the twelve apostles (Acts 1:1-5).

C. The apostles baptized in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4).

1. *“The apostles began to speak...”* (v.4).
2. Some who heard them speaking said, *“These men are full of new wine”* (Acts 2:13). [Only KJV & GNB have 'men'].
3. Those who spoke were identified as Galileans (Acts 2:7).
4. The apostles were Galileans (Acts 1:11). This could hardly be said of the one hundred and twenty.

D. When Peter stood up to speak it was *‘with the eleven’*. Not with the one hundred and twenty.

## III. THE BAPTISM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

A. Signs of wind and fire.

1. The sound of wind (Acts 2:2); often a symbol of the Holy Spirit (John 3:8; 20:22).
2. Tongues like fire (Acts 2:3); often symbolizes the presence of God (Exodus 3:1-5; 13:20-22).

B. Thus, the Spirit had made His presence known audibly and visually.

C. *“And they were filled with the Holy Spirit”* (Acts 2:4).

1. Not filled with a person - The Holy Spirit is a person and not a commodity which can be parceled out.
2. The term *‘filled with the Spirit’* is a figure of speech (called metonymy) where *‘The Spirit’* is put in the stead of the special and extraordinary operations of the Spirit (See *‘Figures of speech by E.W. Bullinger’*).
3. Examples of this figure of speech are:
  - a. We say *‘the kettle is boiling!’* The kettle is put for the water.
  - b. *“They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them”* (Luke 16:29). It is their writings which are meant.
  - c. *“That guy has a big mouth”*. *‘Big mouth’* is put for the fact he talks too much.

#### IV. EXAMPLES OF METONYMY

- A. The Spirit's wisdom: *"I will take of the Spirit which is upon thee and will put it upon them"* (Numbers 11:17).
- B. Thy miraculous gifts: *"Let a double portion of thy Spirit be upon me"* (2 Kings 2:9).
- C. They received the gift of the Spirit: *"And when they laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them"* (Acts 19:6).
- D. Laying of the apostles hands: *"Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given..."* (Acts 8:18), i.e., when he saw that the gifts of the Holy Spirit were given through the laying on of the apostles' hands.
- E. *"Filled"* - empowered.
  - 1. Zacharias filled - empowered to prophesy (Luke 1:67).
  - 2. Ephesians, Holy Spirit came upon them - given gifts of tongues and prophecy (Acts 19:1-6).
  - 3. Peter filled - verbally inspired (Acts 4:8).
  - 4. Paul filled - empowered to perform miracle (Acts 13:9-11).

#### Conclusion

1. We have looked at the meaning of Pentecost, the feast of the harvest, and the feast of the ingathering. These feasts have their fulfillment in Christ.
2. Only the twelve apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit, on the day of Pentecost. This immersion was not with a person but with spiritual power given by the Spirit.
3. Therefore, when we come across phrases like, *"being filled with the Spirit"*, and *"the Spirit came upon them"*, etc. let us understand these as figures of speech (a metonymy) where the Spirit is put for the extraordinary gifts that He gives.

#### Spirit filled people:

Othniel (Judges 3:9-10), Gideon (Judges 6:34), Jephthah (Judges 11:29), Samson (Judges 14:5-6), Saul (1 Samuel 11:6), David (1 Samuel 16:13), Amasai (1 Chronicles 12:18), Azariah (2 Chronicles 15:1), Jahaziel (2 Chronicles 20:14), Zechariah (2 Chronicles 24:20), Ezekiel (Ezekiel 2:2), Daniel (Daniel 4:8-9), Belshazzar (Exodus 31:2-3; 35:30-31), Balaam (Numbers 24:2), Joshua (Numbers 27:18), John the Baptist (Luke 1:15), Zacharias (Luke 1:67), Elizabeth (Luke 1:41), Simeon (Luke 2:25), Peter (Acts 4:8), Paul (Acts 9:17; 13:9), Stephen (Acts 7:55), [Philip, Prochorus, Timon, Nicanor, Parmenas, Nicolas (Acts 6:3-5); Barnabas (Acts 11:22-24), Agabus (Acts 21:10-11). Note these groups also: The messengers of Saul (1 Samuel 19:20), Believers (Acts 4:31), Samaritan (Acts 8:14-17), Ephesians (Acts 19:1-6). Read all of the verses and discover the metonymy.



# FINDING YOUR WAY OUT OF RELIGIOUS CONFUSION

*Beginning The Search For Truth*

## Introduction

1. Look in the phone book or on the Internet under the heading 'Churches' and you may be surprised at number of different churches: Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, Christadelphian, Brethren, Church of God, Church of Christ, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Mormon, Adventist, Pentecostal, etc. It is difficult to say how many different denominations there are because of the way in which they are defined and counted. Here is just one quote...

According to the *Dictionary of Christianity in America* [Protestant] (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1990): "As of 1980 David B. Barrett identified **20,800** Christian denominations worldwide..." (Denominationalism, page 351).



2. That's quite an astounding number, isn't it? With so many different churches all teaching different things and all believing they are following God, we might ask, "How can I possibly know which is the right church?" and, "How can I be sure that what I believe is right?" To whom or where can we turn to answer these questions?
  - a. You might decide to go to your nearest church and ask the pastor or vicar these questions, but how is he likely to answer? A Catholic will, naturally, insist that the Catholic Church is the true church and that what the Catholic Church teaches is the truth. A Jehovah's Witness will, obviously, say that their organization is the true church and that what they teach is what the Bible teaches.
  - b. So you can see that asking the leaders of different religious organizations doesn't really help, does it?
3. In this lesson, I want to suggest a few steps you can take to find the answers for yourself. Discovering the truth for yourself is always a lot more satisfying and it gives you greater confidence that you have found the truth.

## I. ARE YOU REALLY LOOKING FOR THE TRUTH?

*"The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth" (Psalms 145:18 NASB)*

- A. It is one thing to say you are looking for the truth but it is another thing to actually desire the truth in your heart. If you are looking for the truth merely out of curiosity, then you are unlikely to find it. Also, you are unlikely to find the truth if you don't believe that the truth can be found. So you really need to examine yourself to see if you really are looking for the truth. The Bible issues this warning to mockers...

*"How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, Who seek Him with all their heart" (Psalms 119:2 NASBR)*

*"For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. 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 2:7-12 NASB)*

- B. If you don't really have a love for the truth, then you will not find it. That doesn't necessarily mean you won't end up belonging to a religious organization and following their beliefs. But it will not be the Lord's church to which you belong and it will not be the truth that you believe because, without a love of the truth, God will send you a strong delusion so that you believe a lie.

## II. WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF TRUTH?

A. As we said in the introduction, seeking the truth from leaders of religious organizations probably won't get you very far. At His "trial," Jesus said He had come into the world to testify to the truth (John 18:37). Pilate sarcastically replied, "What is truth?" (John 18:38). The implication being that there was no such thing as truth.

B. But for Jesus, the word of God is truth:

1. For Jesus, the truth is all that God has revealed in the Bible:

*"Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth" (John 17:17 NASB)*

*"You are near, O LORD, And all Your commandments are truth" (Psalms 119:151 NASB)*

2. To the Jews who believed in Him, Jesus said...

*"...If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:31-32 NASB).*

3. The word of God is truth and God desires that all men come to a knowledge of the truth. Paul instructs us to pray for all men (1 Timothy 2:1-2) and then says...

*"This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3-4 NASB)*

## III. STUDYING THE SCRIPTURES

A. Having satisfied yourself that you *really* are searching for the truth, and having acknowledged the word of God as the only source of truth, you are ready to begin a study of God's word where you will discover the truth you seek. You might ask...

1. How do I study the Bible? This will be the subject of another lesson.

2. Will I really find the truth if I study God's word? As we have seen, God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). If God desires us to come to a knowledge of the truth, then we can be sure that He has (i) provided the source of truth (the Bible), and (ii) given us the means and ability to find it in His word. Note the following Scriptures...

*"My son, if you will receive my words And treasure my commandments within you, Make your ear attentive to wisdom, Incline your heart to understanding; For if you cry for discernment, Lift your voice for understanding; If you seek her as silver And search for her as for hidden treasures; Then you will discern the fear of the LORD And discover the knowledge of God" (Proverbs 2:1-5 NASB)*

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

1. To those who already study God's word for truth: this is good, but it is easy to become lazy and start relying too much on sermons, tapes, videos, commentaries, etc. Remember to follow the example of the Bereans...

*"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. To those who are just beginning the search for truth: we spoke earlier about a self-examination to see if we really are looking for truth. Sincere seekers of truth are not looking to merely fill their heads with knowledge but have as their aim to apply the truth they learn. Here, then, is a truth you can learn and apply today: God desires all men to be saved and God has revealed in His word the way of salvation...
  - a. What the Bible teaches about being saved:

*“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16 NASB)*

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

- b. A Biblical example of someone learning the truth and obeying it:

*“But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza. (This is a desert road.) So he got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship, and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah. Then the Spirit said to Philip, Go up and join this chariot. Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, Do you understand what you are reading? And he said, Well, how could I, unless someone guides me? And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: He was led as a sheep to slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He does not open His mouth. In humiliation His judgment was taken away; who will relate His generation? For His life is removed from the earth. The eunuch answered Philip and said, Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else? Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him. As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized? And Philip said, If you believe with all your heart, you may. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him” (Acts 8:26-38 NASB)*

## Conclusion

1. **Examine yourself to see if you really are searching for the truth.** Some people say they are looking for the truth but, really, they are just looking for something to excite, enthrall, entertain, and fill an empty void. God’s word warns us that if we do not have a love for the truth, then we will end up believing a lie that will end in our destruction.
2. **Acknowledge God’s word as the only source of truth.** It is a common mistake for those seeking the truth to go to the wrong source – this might be religious leaders, religious books, etc. If we do not accept God’s word as the only source of truth, then we are really saying there is no such thing as truth. Going to wrong sources will, obviously, lead to error.
3. **Study the Bible.** You may have a desire to know the truth and begin studying the Bible, but you may not know *how* to study. We will be discussing some basics of Bible study in another lesson. There are many good books on how to study the Bible, so check out your local Christian book store.

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

