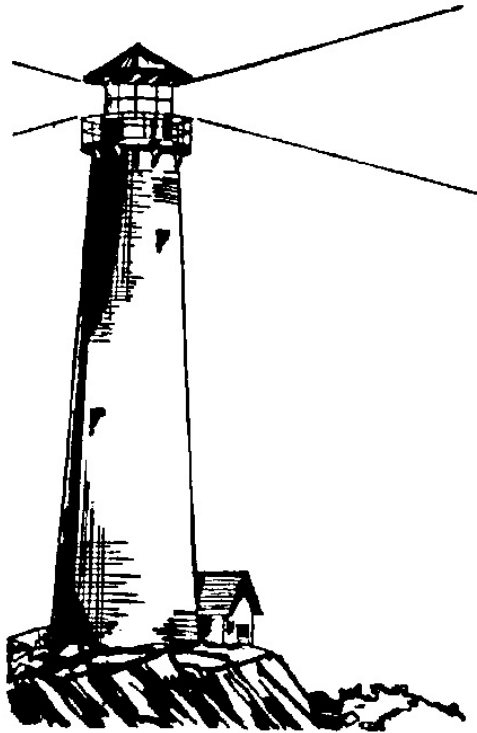


CHURCH OF GOD

SUNDAY SCHOOL QUARTERLY



**WARNINGS AND PROMISES
FROM GOD**

WARNINGS AND PROMISES

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NOTE TO THE TEACHERS

This booklet is intended to be a *help* in preparing Sunday school lessons. The title, subject, and topics are only the menu. It is *your responsibility* to prepare the meal.

The proper ingredients are the salty inspirations of the Holy Spirit, seasoned with His grace. Bake the ingredients at a hot temperature in the oven of prayer. The time-tested recipe for preparing a nutritious meal is found in 2 Timothy 2:15, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

LESSON 1

REPENT OR PERISH

Scripture Text: Luke 13:1-5

A warning and a promise are opposites, one speaking of danger to be avoided and the other of good to be sought. Warnings and promises are the negative and the positive, the unpleasant and the pleasant. The Bible contains both. We have our choice: destruction or safety, death or life, severity or goodness. We must heed the warnings to enjoy the promises.

This quarter we will alternately study some warnings and promises. Warnings alone might discourage, and promises alone might cause us to relax our efforts. Taken together as God gave them, they equip us for the Christian life. Let us pray as we study.

MEMORY VERSE: I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.
—*Luke 13:3*

All Must Repent

Luke 13:1-3 Some told him of the Galileans. Nothing more is known about that incident. Apparently, Pilate had killed some Jews, who came to Jerusalem to worship while they were in the very act of sacrificing. Tellers of the story reasoned they must have been especially wicked people since they met such tragic death.

Jesus said, **Nay**. They were not worse than other sinners. Suffering in this world is not a measure of sinfulness. **Except ye repent**. Jesus brought the issue personally to His hearers. **THEY** must repent—acknowledge, have a godly sorrow for, and turn from their sin. Their need for repentance was as great as that of the greatest sinner. Repentance is essential to salvation. Without repentance, **ALL** are lost from God eternally, damned in hell. **ALL** includes each of us. **WE** must repent or perish.

What conclusion do you think these people who talked to Jesus reached concerning their spiritual condition and that of the Galileans? It is easy for us to let our image suffer from comparison with others. We learn it is not good to do so by reading 2 Corinthians 10:12. There are some instances in the Bible where sufferings came as a punishment for sin. At other times, suffering came to good people, such as Job and Paul. We should conclude that suffering is part of salvation when reading 1 Peter 4:12-19.

The Tower of Siloam

Luke 13:4-5 Jesus recalled another tragedy with which these people were familiar—the falling of a **tower**, killing **eighteen** people. That is all we know of this. Jesus drew the same conclusion and gave the same warning as before. Not excessive sinfulness necessarily, or sin at all, brought tragic death to them. The most respectable ones are sinners as much as they were. The **FACT** of sin, **NOT** the **AMOUNT**, requires repentance. **ALL** must repent, for **ALL** have sinned (Romans 3:23; Galatians 3:22). Sin is essentially rebellion against God, the disposition to do one's **OWN** will rather than His. All have this rebellion naturally. To repent is to drop rebellion and surrender to the will of God.

Except ye repent. Jesus repeated the warning to burn it deep into our minds as well as theirs and to make plain the fact that repentance is absolutely necessary to salvation.

Since there is no solution **except ye repent**, should not this be part of all Gospel teaching so that it can be known by all? There are those who have joined a church, thinking this makes them saved, but they have never repented. Some think they are saved by faith and nothing else—just accept Jesus as their Savior, and all is well for eternity. Some following this teaching, no doubt, do repent, but many do not. They need to know it is necessary. The unsaved and untaught both need to be told of this requirement.

Repent and *believe* are frequent words in Jesus' teaching and the rest of the New Testament. Jesus said, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15). Repentance and belief joined together reach the Savior. Either one alone cannot save. Next week we will study the requirement of believing.

What Is Repentance?

Repentance is the strait gate, the narrow way, that leads to life (Matthew 7:14). Few find life because they do not repent and will not go through the strait gate. Repentance is a change in one's thinking, in one's attitude. It is brought about with conviction by the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-9). Conviction shows one of his sinful condition. Seeing his corrupt heart brings godly sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:9-11). He is sorry, not that his sin has been found out (this is the "sorrow of the world") but sorry that he has sinned. He acknowledges to God his guilt and need. He turns his back on his sins, hating and renouncing them. He desires to and does make right his wrongs as much as is possible. God meets this repentance with forgiveness and cleansing. Any sorrow or conviction that does not produce action is not godly sorrow. It is

incomplete. Repentance includes: (1) an acknowledgment of guilt, (2) sorrow, (3) renunciation, (4) restitution, (5) surrender to God, (6) plea for forgiveness, and (7) faith and trust in the shed blood of Jesus.

Repentance is painful. Some years ago, a farmer was helping shred corn. The rollers caught his hand and quickly drew his arm into the machine, tearing the flesh. He pulled out his penknife, asked one to open it, and he cut the few cords still joining arm to body. Painful? Yes, but he did it to save his life. Repentance is like that—cutting loose the damning sins to save the soul (Mark 9:43-48).

Repentance is not a thing once experienced and over with. It is a permanent attitude of the heart. A saved person depends upon God, for repentance has taught him he cannot depend upon himself. A saved person has a hatred of sin, a continual shunning of any appearance of sin. We could say a saint is not always *repenting*, but always *repentant*.

God is merciful. Immediately following our lesson Scripture is a parable showing the loving mercy of God that waits, giving the sinner every chance to repent (Luke 13:6-9). Our loving Father hates to punish. He longs to save everyone. It is His "goodness" that "leadeth thee to repentance" (Romans 2:4).

JUST A THOUGHT

**Wrong methods are bad,
wrong doctrine is worse,
a wrong spirit is worst.**



LESSON 2

HE THAT BELIEVETH SHALL HAVE ETERNAL LIFE

Scripture Text: John 3:14-21

A light attitude toward God, held by many, assumes that if we do nothing extremely bad, all will be well in the end, because God is love, and even though we fall short of His will, He will understand and say, "Well done." Others teach "once saved, always saved," regardless of the life that follows. Some appear to think that the Bible is all promises of reward and everyone is sure of something good.

On the other hand, some live in fear, picturing God as counting transgressions so as to punish to the limit. Some think there is no victory over sin in this life. All these are distorted views of the truth. God gives warnings to turn us to the promises. Belief in Christ is essential to salvation.

MEMORY VERSE: 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. —John 3:16

A Type of Our Believing

John 3:14-15 As Moses lifted up the serpent. Numbers 21:4-9 records the event referred to. **Even so must the Son of man be lifted up.** These words show a comparison, two events compared as similar. The first event is a type of the second. In what points are they similar? (1) The Israelites faced physical death. We face spiritual death. (2) Sin caused Israel's trouble. Sin brought our lost condition. (3) The brass image Moses lifted on a pole was of an evil thing, a poisonous serpent. The Son of man lifted on the Cross was an evil thing too, for it was a curse to be hanged on a tree or cross. He was made "to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus was made a curse for us that He might redeem us from the curse (Galatians 3:13). (4) The snake-bitten ones were to look upon the brazen serpent. Sinners are to believe in Christ crucified. Their looking involved both belief of and obedience to God's promise. What a great promise! (5) God offered His loving mercy. The Israelites who looked were given physical life. Sinners who believe and look to Christ are given spiritual life. (6) The promise to Israel was conditional; only those who looked received. The promise to us is conditional; only those

who believe receive. On this precious promise hangs the fulfillment of all the other promises concerning man's life and happiness (Romans 8:32).

The Basis for and Result of Believing

John 3:16 For God so loved the world. The basis for our believing is God's great love that made the way for us. It was nothing we had or were or did. Why did He love the world of mankind so ruined by sin? Because of the value He set upon a soul. A soul is the creation of God—of His own making. A soul is capable of eternal enjoyment or eternal suffering. We can read and explain some reasons for God's concern for us, but we can never understand the extreme love that pressed Him to the point of giving His only Son to save us. He gave Him not only as a Friend but as a Savior, not only as a holy Example but as a sin-bearing Sacrifice. He gave Him not only to stoop to live as a human in a sinful world, but to die a shameful death at the hands of those He came to save—His own creation. Men not only killed their Savior, but their Creator also. Such love and giving is beyond our comprehension. But we need not understand to receive, just believe—believe that the Son of God died in our place.

Man is perishing, that is, dying as the result of a process of ruin. Sin does not strike man down in sudden death; it causes him to perish. He dies as a result of slow moral and spiritual deterioration. His senses become hardened; his soul starves to death; his life disintegrates, and spiritual putrefaction sets in. It is to save us from this process of progressive deterioration that God did something of immeasurable significance. **He gave his only begotten Son** that perishing man could **have everlasting life**.

What does believing in Jesus Christ do for one? It brings life to the dead soul. Souls are dead because of sin. Accepting His sacrifice for oneself saves from sin. This gives life—eternal life—to the dead soul. Eternal life means not only life which goes on forever, but life which is lived in continuing fellowship with God. Only Jesus Christ the Son of God can give this. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Truly, this is the greatest promise ever made.

God's Motive

John 3:17 God sent not his Son into the world to condemn but to save. How different this is from the concept heathens hold of their gods. They think their gods to be full of wrath and vengeance that must be appeased by gifts, sacrifices, and sufferings. Even some who call themselves Christian try

to appease God's wrath by repeated prayers, good works, and sufferings of penance. God's desire is not to punish but to give life if we will take it. We can come to Him, not in fear and terror, but in trust. God's love—that is His motive—is such a perfect love that no love on earth can be compared with it.

Believing Removes Condemnation

John 3:18-20 He that believeth on him is not condemned. Many are condemned, lost, headed for hell, just because they have **not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.** Condemnation does not wait for us to do some excessively wicked act. No, all are NOW condemned who have not actively trusted in Christ. Christ is light. Men turn down Christ. **And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness.** Belief removes condemnation, and unbelief brings condemnation. To escape condemnation, one must turn to Christ in repentance and belief.

The Lifting of Christ

As the serpent was lifted on the pole before the people, so Christ was lifted on a Cross of shame. When He said, "And I, if I be lifted up . . . will draw all men" (John 12:32-33), He meant if He would be honored in our lives, He would draw others in faith to Himself. We lift Christ in honor when we honor and obey His Word—His Word is truth. The work of the Church of God is to lift Christ for all to see (1 Timothy 3:15).

JUST A THOUGHT

**A love that looks upward, we term adoration;
A love that looks level, we know as affection;
But a love that descends—that is grace.**



LESSON 3

NOT EVERYONE THAT SAITH LORD, LORD

Scripture Text: Matthew 7:21-23

We need not worry about the conduct of a man who truly believes in Jesus Christ. If his conduct is not fashioned after the pattern of Christ, then Christ is not his Lord. To reject Christ's teaching and yet call Him Lord is to make a ruinous mistake. This cuts one off from all the good and rich promises that He wants to fulfill in one's life. Christianity is not wholly a matter of conduct.

Behind all conduct lies conviction, and behind the Christian life lies firm conviction about all truth that the Bible teaches. That person is a Christian who acknowledges Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and means what he says to such an extent that his whole life conforms to the moral and spiritual requirements of this conviction. The doctrine of the complete deity of Christ is the basic Christian conviction. Today, we study what might be both a warning and a promise.

MEMORY VERSE: And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? —Luke 6:46

Do God's Will

Matthew 7:21 Jesus came to earth to save sinners, not to condemn them. Nevertheless, many of them will not be saved. **Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.** Jesus was not speaking of His opposers but of professors of Christianity, those who claim Jesus as their Lord, those who pray to Him and ask for His blessing. Why are they lost? Because talk without obedience to God is worthless. They do not do the will of God. Their will is not surrendered to His will. They plan their own way and follow their own will. In their heart is no desire to obey Him above all. Faith without works is dead (James 2:17-20).

The will of God for us is in the Bible, especially the New Testament, for we are living in the Gospel dispensation. We are commanded to do the will of God from the heart. How can weak human beings do the will of God? (Read Romans 12:1-2.) The transforming work done by God makes us able to do His will. Jesus, in saying a corn of wheat must die to bring forth fruit, taught that we must lose our lives, or die, to really live. Regenerate people

are given both the desire and the ability to do God's will. The life of Christ within IS the desire and the ability to DO God's will.

No Record of Works

Matthew 7:22 In that day—on the Judgment Day, they will attempt to present evidence to prove their right to enter Heaven: (1) they **prophe-sied**—preached God's Word, (2) they **cast out devils**—were channels of the power of God, and (3) they did **many wonderful works**—were busy doing good. All was done **in thy name**—all while professing to be His and to work by His power and authority. This evidence will not pass God's judgment.

Tragic Disappointment

Matthew 7:23 Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you. Christ's verdict is final. He does not mean none of these were ever saved, but that if they were, they had at some time forsaken Him as their Lord, and His knowledge of them is so completely blotted out that it is the same as never having known them. To know Him and be known of Him is salvation. **Depart from me**—what tragic disappointment to be separated from Him forever. **De-part**, where to? "Into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41).

They call their works **wonderful**, but Christ calls them **iniquity**. Why? Either because (1) those works did not proceed from Him, were in the first place not of His planning nor done by His working, or (2) since doing them, the people had turned from Jesus and lived after their own ways, thus cancelling their name from His record in the Book of Life.

To come to the final Judgment and find that what one trusted in is worthless—what unspeakable anguish! Should not this warning of Jesus be heeded now, while there is time to remedy any lack? Should not we teach it and live it, that all be warned in time? "*The principle of the Christian life is not using God, but letting God use us*" (R.G. LeTourneau).

Two Kinds of Works

Both classes of people in our lesson—those who enter Heaven and those turned away—do works, some pleasing to God, the others not. What is the difference? One group thought that they were saved by works alone; the other was saved by faith and works—the will of God. Actions of some lives spring from the life of God within the heart. In other lives, actions are put on from

the outside in imitation of Christian works. The difference is as that between a flower brought to bloom by the life in the root and a plastic flower stuck into the ground. One cannot have the Christ-life within and not do works according to the will of God. Outward works cannot produce life in the soul. For one's works to please God, trust must be placed in the One living within, not in the works produced outside. Sinners do not do the will of God. To do God's will is necessary for entrance into Heaven. Can there be sinning Christians? (See 1 John 3:8-10.)

The Harm in Man-Made Organizations

There are many religious organizations called churches. Some have books and cards recording membership that bear the date and place of their accepting Christ. Most are deceived into believing these practices are a ticket to Heaven. They substitute joining for salvation. At the Judgment, many will look back to that outward form of baptism or printed card for proof of their standing with God instead of into their hearts for the witness of the Spirit. There are countless numbers blindly substituting these things for being born again. It takes more than church work; it takes being born of God. Christian living involves crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension into heavenly places.

JUST A THOUGHT

**How beautiful are the feet of them
that bring glad tidings of good things!**



LESSON 4

STRENGTHENED WITH ALL MIGHT

Scripture Text: Colossians 1:7-14

Last week we learned that obedience to God's will is necessary to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Today we see how human beings are able to obey God acceptably. Why do many say, "Yes, I know I ought to do this or that, but I don't," or "it seems I can't"? But here and there are a few whose godly lives impress us as being according to God's will. What is the difference? Whose strength is each using? God does not require us to do what we cannot. There is help for our inability.

God has provided us the means of living pleasing to Him by giving us His strength through the Holy Spirit living in us.

MEMORY VERSE: The LORD will give strength unto his people; the LORD will bless his people with peace. —Psalm 29:11

Paul Answers a Report

Colossians 1:7-8 Epaphras, a minister of the church at Colosse, had given Paul news of that church. It was good news of a people full of faith, love, and fruit bearing. It brought joy and thanksgiving to Paul. He prayed that the blessings would continue and increase. They were eligible for blessings, for they loved **in the Spirit**, not with faulty, human love.

The Great Need

Colossians 1:9-10 Paul was ready to express plenty of criticism of the Colossians concerning their many unsound beliefs and practices. But he began by praising the things in their lives that were good. Paul assured these Colossians he was praying for them. For what did Paul pray? He prayed that these saints:

(1) **Be filled with the knowledge of his will.** Last week we learned the absolute necessity of doing God's will. *Knowing* it is necessary to *doing* it. Mere head knowledge of God's will is not enough. We may memorize Scripture and learn the doctrines without truly knowing God's will. We need to know it **in all wisdom**—able to grasp God's meaning, separate it from our own, and compare and harmonize Scriptures to wisely apply them. **And**

spiritual understanding—to understand with the heart, to know with insight that the Holy Spirit gives. To know God's will we must first know God. We cannot know it with natural, unregenerate powers only. (Read 1 Corinthians 2:14.)

(2) **Walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.** Worthy to bear His name. Pleasing Him in all things.

(3) **Being fruitful in every good work.** Yes, God expects good works from us. They do not save, but they are a part of salvation. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). Good works spring from a good heart, a heart made pure by Christ. First is the fruit of the Spirit inside, which produces fruit of good works outside. (Read John 15:5 and Galatians 5:22-23.)

(4) **Be increasing in the knowledge of God.** Knowing Him better and better as we walk with Him day by day. We **MUST** know Him, for to know Him "is life eternal" (John 17:3). Knowing Him is more than knowing facts about Him. To know Him requires His presence in us, brought about by surrender and obedience to Him.

Paul presented a high standard here, but it is not too high. He prayed it for the Colossians. He wrote it to us through the inspiration of God.

The Promise of Deliverance

Colossians 1:11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, not ours. He gives us of His own power. It enables us to live as these verses say. Added with power are **patience and longsuffering** to endure disappointment, hardship, suffering, opposition or persecution and remain faithful, even **with joyfulness**.

Colossians 1:12-14 What are some of the things Christ does for us when we put our trust in Him? (1) He makes us **partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light**. By sending the gift of His Son, God gave all He had to give and all we need for our salvation. Salvation brings each saint the promise of a place in God's kingdom and a home in Heaven. Truly, a rich inheritance! The Holy Spirit is the first payment, or earnest, of this inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14; 1 Peter 1:4). (2) Sin is darkness. Christ is light. God not only leads us into light, but He delivers **us from the power of darkness**, and translates **us into the kingdom of his dear Son**. (3) He forgives our sins, redeems us **through his blood**. These works of God place us in condition for His strength to come into us, and all His promises become personal to each saint.

Only when we make things right with God relative to our past, our

present, and our anticipated future, do we really start to live the good life in God.

Paul's Experience

Paul had lived in the flesh, and then he began living in the spirit. He found that living in the flesh, or by his natural powers, was not satisfying. In Romans 7:5 and 18, he said: "When we were in the flesh, the motions of sins . . . did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death . . . to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." In Romans 7:24, he asked, "Who shall deliver me?" He answered in verse 25, "Through Jesus Christ our Lord." How had Paul found this out? When he yielded to Jesus (Acts, Chapter 9), was saved and filled with the Holy Spirit, he found that living "after the Spirit" set him "free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:1-2). With His commands, God always provides the means to carry them out.

There is much preaching but little practicing. People hear, then go away unchanged. They read, and do nothing. Why? One reason could be that they desire the RESULT but do not obtain the MEANS. Some know they should go to church, but they have no desire to go. They know they should love people, but they do not have love in their hearts. They desire to live holy lives but do not have Him who is holy. The heart of a Spirit-filled person is filled with desire and love and holiness seeking an outlet. When God saves a person, He gives him a new nature that rejoices to do His will. He offers this strength. It is one of His promises.

We do not attain victory in life as the result of what we do, but only as the result of what we receive. Salvation is not any achievement of ours; it is God's gift, and it will be given to everyone who is willing to take it. Have you taken it?

JUST A THOUGHT

**God is not only able to satisfy
every legitimate longing of the human heart,
but He is able to make every longing legitimate.**

—American Holiness Journal



LESSON 5

THE UNFORGIVING STAY UNFORGIVEN

Scripture Texts: Matthew 6:14-15; Matthew 18:21-35

We must forgive to be forgiven. Can an unrepentant person really forgive? It takes love to forgive. Can an unsaved person who never rejoiced to be free from his own sins feel desire to loose another? Can we in our strength accomplish forgiveness of the quality we desire from God?

"They that are in the flesh"—unregenerate—"cannot please God" in anything (Romans 8:8). Repentance toward God opens the door for the love of God to come in. It takes His love to forgive. Christian love forgives even before forgiveness is sought.

MEMORY VERSE: Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

—Matthew 6:12

Jesus' Promise

Matthew 6:14 For if ye forgive *If*, so much hangs upon this little word. We all want to be forgiven. Not all want it enough to take the way to forgiveness, but do not all wish their own sins were covered with forgiveness? Jesus promises this blessing to those who give it to others. We pray to be forgiven as we forgive (verse 12). Therefore, every time we pray this prayer, if we have not forgiven all those who have done us wrong, we pray for God's damnation to our souls. This is very serious business.

Christ's promise is this: Forgive and you shall be forgiven. "But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses" (Mark 11:26). Love and revenge cannot live in the same heart. An unforgiving spirit chokes out all possibility for the expression of love.

Unforgiveness Shuts the Door

Matthew 6:15 If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. While our Heavenly Father delights in mercy and longs to forgive us, still it is possible to shut the door against Him so He cannot. How? **If ye forgive not** To flow at all, the virtue of forgiveness must flow two ways—into our hearts from God and out of our hearts to others.

Peter's Question

Matthew 18:21-22 Peter, the outspoken member of the band of disciples, presented this question to Jesus: **Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?** Like so many, Peter was deeply conscious of the wrongs done to him by others (**against me**) and apparently quite unconscious of the wrongs he did to them. The Jewish religion taught that three offenses should be forgiven and the fourth punished; so Peter probably felt very generous in forgiving seven times. But Jesus' answer changed Peter's selfish generosity to a selfless **seventy times seven**. Jesus was not dealing with specific numbers in this answer, but rather, He was stressing the necessity for unlimited forgiveness. It is not the act of forgiveness but the attitude to forgive that Christ requires of us.

A Parable to Illustrate

Matthew 18:23-35 In order to illustrate to His disciples the meaning of forgiveness, Jesus told the parable about a certain king who discovered that a servant **owed him ten thousand talents**. This was a tremendous sum of money—incomprehensible to the people of that day. Likewise, our debt is so great that, by our own means, we could never even hope to pay God. Since the servant could not pay his debt, the king commanded that he, along with his wife and children, be sold into slavery. Our sinful ways always involve the innocent.

The servant therefore fell down on his knees, asking for mercy and begging for time to repay the debt. He admitted his transgression, and the king had compassion on him. Not only did he receive what he asked, but the king completely wiped the debt from his books, placing no further obligation upon him to pay.

The parable did not stop here, however. This same servant went out and took a fellow servant **by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest**. He had been forgiven a debt of several million dollars; then, without pity or mercy, he demanded payment of a mere fifteen dollars owed him by his fellow servant.

What a fuss we make about small personal injuries by others, unmindful that they are as nothing compared with our sins against God. The king let it be known that this attitude was considered hateful in the sight of a forgiving God. Our salvation depends upon our forgiveness, and God will never forgive us until we have an attitude of forgiveness toward those who transgress against us. When the king heard about the unmerciful servant, he, in wrath,

delivered him into prison **till he should pay the debt**. God can and will forgive every form of sin, but when He freely forgives a man his debt, and that man turns about and treats his brother without love, the wrath of God is upon that man. We must ever realize what God has pardoned in us. God has abundant love and mercy, but eternal punishment will come to those who do not forgive as they have been forgiven. Forgiveness is God's greatest gift. To stand free from guilt is a man's greatest treasure.

One might ask if we should forgive if we are not asked. Some may never ask. A true Christian love automatically forgives. It forgives even before forgiveness is sought. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Signs of Unforgiveness

In examining our hearts for lingering unforgiveness, what shall we look for? Resentment. Desire for revenge. Love of gossip. Satisfaction at misfortune befalling one who has wronged us. Lack of concern for a brother who falls into sin. A critical spirit, seeing faults first. Many others can be named. Is not this the reason for troubles or factions in a congregation? An unforgiving spirit will separate one from another, preventing unity. An unforgiving spirit shuts one off from God's forgiveness—and so from salvation. This hinders the spread of the Gospel, hinders souls from finding God.

Forgiveness does not give us a bad memory, but when one forgives, he never mentions the matter to bring it up ever again. (Read Isaiah 43:25.)

JUST A THOUGHT

Only the truly forgiven can truly forgive.



LESSON 6

GOD'S LOVE IN US

Scripture Texts: John 17:26; Romans 5:5

Can one love because he is told he should? Can we love by trying? How can we love God, the brethren, our enemies, and one another as God commands? We cannot with the power we already have. God's love must be put into us. How? God gives His love to His people. We cannot love and forgive without God's love in us.

MEMORY VERSE: God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him. —1 John 4:16

God's Love to Be in Us

In John, Chapter 17, Jesus was praying to His Father the night before His death. This prayer was not for Himself. That prayer had been prayed in Gethsemane, prayed and finished and answered. This prayer was for His people, those with Him then and all who would believe afterward. This includes us. As a last request for the people He loved enough to die for, He asked for the most necessary and far-reaching gifts to carry them through the years of life's warfare without His physical presence.

John 17:26 And I have declared unto them thy name. Jesus mentioned His Father's name many times through this chapter. His name represents His Person, His power, His love, all that He is. Jesus gave the Father's name, and the disciples accepted it, believed in it, trusted in it, and trusted the Father. They were to be kept through (by the power of) His name (verse 11).

That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them. Through the power of His name, His love is put into those who trust in His name. This is Jesus' purpose in opening the way for them to know the Father. We cannot measure or comprehend that love, but we can know a portion of it we feel stirring in our own hearts. The limitless reach of His love is too great for us to fully comprehend. The same quality of love He had, we are to have. Where Jesus is, there is love.

Two Kinds of Love

There is a natural, human love that God built into man when He created him. Husbands and wives love each other, parents love children, and friends

love friends, but human love is of a limited, selfish kind. We love in areas that touch ourselves. There is an old saying, "God bless me and my son John—me and my wife, him and his wife, us four and no more." (However, read Matthew 5:46.)

The love of God is of a different quality. His love is pure, holy, impartial, unselfish, unlimited, complete, and transforming. His love first flows back as love to God. It fills the heart with joy. It is an urge in the heart to give oneself that others may know Him. His love is a warm feeling flowing out to all people, known and unknown, lovable or unlovely. Natural human love alone can never please God. We must have the love of God.

How Love Is Given

Romans 5:5 The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. To have IT, we must have HIM. God is love. All of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost) have the essential characteristic of love. All Three join in any work in us. A justified person has the love of God. He can forgive those who wrong him and act as directed by love. The love of God comes in to flood the soul when **the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us**. This is the normal Christian love. Many do not reach it (often because they are not taught), but those lives are subnormal, immature, unfulfilled spiritually, and fall short in Christian work. Many have hesitated to proclaim this glorious doctrine. The church, filled with comfortable, self-satisfied people, sometimes cares more for lectures on ethics than it does for this glorious soul-searching Gospel. The cry of the church today should be as in this old hymn, "*Back to the blessed old Bible; Back to the light of its word.*" We need to get back to the words of our Savior, loving, obeying them all and back to the saving Gospel which sustained the early church.

Love Is Not Formed by Trying

First Peter 1:22 reads, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit [these were saved people] unto unfeigned love of the brethren." They had obtained love by their obedience and the Spirit's work. Therefore, they were to use that love to "love one another with a pure heart fervently." This shows us how we, too, can have and exercise the love of God.

Love reaches out. The work of God is one connected whole. Each part is related to the other part. The love of God does not stand separate. It is a

two-way love. Many would teach that God's love takes in everything. His love to us causes us to return that love to God by way of obedience to His commandments (John 14:15; John 15:10). It affects all phases of the life in which the Spirit dwells. Jesus, speaking to unbelievers who desired to kill Him, said, "But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you" (John 5:42). That lack of love hindered their believing. This love will help our believing: "Faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6). Many long for more faith. Its fullness comes by way of love, and love comes by way of the Holy Spirit. "Perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18). Not that a person will not meet frightening occurrences or circumstances; these may come as long as we are in this world. But inward fear (which is entirely different from outward, physical fright) is removed from the heart. (Read 2 Timothy 1:7.)

As this love is good to receive, it is also necessary to live by and to go to Heaven by. (Read 1 Corinthians 13:3, 13.) How can we keep this love? We find the answer in Matthew 26:41; Hebrews 12:15; and Jude 20-21.

JUST A THOUGHT

**God cannot do THROUGH you
what He is not permitted to do IN you.**



LESSON 7

DANGER OF SINNING WILLFULLY

Scripture Texts: Proverbs 1:23-33; Hebrews 6:4-6

To rebel against God is tragic. God chooses many souls and anoints them with His Holy Spirit. Some are to preach, some are to teach, and some are helpers. All are responsible to fill their places in obeying God's Word. But some do not listen closely. They take things into their own hands, having a higher regard for their own way and the opinion of the people and too little for God's. They refuse to humble themselves before God. They openly turn their backs on God. As a result of this rebellion, God turns His back on them, and they die in despair and tragedy.

To turn down the precious light of truth opens the door for every deception of Satan to come and work in that heart. It is possible for a once-saved person to get to a place where he cannot be saved again.

MEMORY VERSE: He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

—Proverbs 29:1

God's Promise

Proverbs 1:23 Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. God does this for every person who opens his heart. All receive light. Some receive more than others. But all are responsible to walk in that light—to obey it. We are not required to walk in another's light.

The Tragic Response

Proverbs 1:24-33 Because I have called, and ye refused. These took a rebellious attitude against the leading of God. **But ye have set at nought all my counsel . . . I also will laugh at your calamity.** This is God speaking. Yes, there can come a time when we call on God, and He will only **laugh** and **mock** when we desperately need Him. We refuse to hear Him, and He will refuse to hear us.

Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer . . . Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own

devices. God allows them, and helps them, to be wrapped up in themselves. Notice the difference found in **Proverbs 1:33** from the rest.

The Position Once Held

Hebrews 6:4-5 For it is impossible for those—those who have come to an immovable wall. This is speaking of those who: (1) **were once enlightened.** They have heard the Gospel and understood it. They know God's commands. (2) **Have tasted of the heavenly gift.** They have had salvation from sin, been born again. (3) **Were made partakers of the Holy Ghost.** They had been filled with the Spirit. (4) **Have tasted the good word of God.** They experienced the meaning of God's promises and warnings. (5) **Have tasted the powers of the world to come.** God gives His people a foretaste here of blessings that will be fully experienced in the next life. They have seen the powers of Heaven, of God, exercised here in behalf of His children.

The Holy Spirit is "the earnest," or prepayment, of the saints' inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14). The people in question have felt the Spirit's power in their lives. They have been in the highest position opened to people on earth. They have dwelt in the holy of holies. They have had the greatest privileges. They are not ignorant. They have known God and His way (2 Peter 2:20-21). The more we know of God, the more responsible we become for what we do with that knowledge.

An Impossible Position

Hebrews 6:6 If they shall fall away—from this position, if they turn from God—it is impossible **to renew them again unto repentance.** They may wish to turn back to God but cannot because a spirit of pride renders them unable to humble themselves with a true repenting attitude. God could and would save them if they would repent, but they cannot. They themselves have cut off the lifeline to God. They sinned willfully (Hebrews 10:26). They have separated themselves from Christ's atonement because they cannot repent. They refused the only remedy. There is no other sacrifice to atone for their sin.

It is a serious sin that brings so dire a consequence. To knowingly turn from this most blessed place in God is to **crucify Christ afresh.** It is to **put him to an open shame.** Hebrews 10:29 tells us it is treading "under foot the Son of God," counting His "blood . . . an unholy thing," doing "despite unto the Spirit of grace." Also, refer to Matthew 12:31. Can there be a worse sin? Yet, this can all be done inside one's heart with, perhaps, no outside, visible

act. It is not only the sin that brings the despairing problem but the attitude of the heart.

Repentance Is a Blessing

Repentance is valued too lightly by the majority of people. Do we look upon its discipline as a curse or a blessing? Paul asked, "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Romans 2:4). Should we seek to escape from or welcome the arrows of conviction and chastisement of God? The Apostles at Jerusalem "glorified God" for having "granted repentance unto life" to the Gentiles (Acts 11:18).

Different From Mistakes

Does this warning make God seem a hard taskmaster and the regaining of Christian life impossible? No, God is full of mercy, and "he remembereth that we are dust" (Psalm 103:14). Not all sins are willful rebellion from the highest position in grace. There is a "sin not unto death" (1 John 5:17). Some sins are stumblings in weakness. One may be overtaken by sudden temptation in an unguarded moment and slip into sin, but this is not rebellion. God watches in compassion and patience for those to repent and come back into good standing. He gives us chance after chance. He chastises to bring us back (1 John 2:1). If we sin, quickly "remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will . . . remove thy candlestick [there is no place now for Christ to place any more light]" (Revelation 2:5).

Remember that the devil is an old deceiver. If he can, he will discourage until you throw away the hope you have, thinking you have it not and that there is no use. Thus, you may finally put yourself beyond hope. "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward" (Hebrews 10:35). Jesus said, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matthew 26:41). What must we watch? What must we pray? (Read Jude 24; John 15:4-7; Philippians 4:7.)

JUST A THOUGHT

**It can be said that pride is the cart rope
which drags man's sins behind him.**

LESSON 8

I WILL IN NO WISE CAST OUT

Scripture Texts: John 6:35-44; Acts 10:34-43

God desires to save and keep us. He will never cast out those who come to Him. He provides the means for us to remain in Him.

Jesus came to save all (1 Timothy 2:4-6). Then why are not all saved? Because there are conditions to be met by us. Contrary to the teaching of some, there ARE things a person must do before he can receive the salvation Christ offers. In the lesson verses, those are given as fearing God and working righteousness. **He that cometh to me**—is there any other way to come except in repentance and trust and obedience?

MEMORY VERSE: All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. —John 6:37

The Staff of Life

John 6:35-36 John described the nature of Jesus by many figures of speech. He called Him Light, the Good Shepherd, the Way, the Truth, and the Life; the Door by which men enter into salvation; the Vine from which the branches grow. In today's lesson, he noted that Jesus is **the bread of life**.

Two things are to be said about bread: (1) it is the staff of life, and (2) it satisfies an elemental hunger. Nothing contains so many and such perfectly balanced food values as does a grain of wheat. A person may or may not fancy bread as a diet, but the fact remains that it is nature's outstanding staple. Likewise, we know that bread is the one article that a hungry world cries out for most. Other articles of food are tasty and desirable, but bread is essential. Christ, the Bread of Life, satisfies humanity's greatest need. He alone can satisfy the hunger of soul that is even deeper than the hunger of the body.

No One Refused

John 6:36-37, 44 If this were the only verse we had on this subject, we might think: (1) the Father chooses only certain ones to be saved; (2) He saves them without their choice; and (3) those saved can never again be lost. These teachings find no support in the Scriptures. Compare all Scripture

together. (Read Revelation 22:17; John 10:28-29; 2 Peter 2:20.) Jesus was talking to unbelievers. He had just said, **Ye also have seen me, and believe not.** They wanted the material benefits of following Jesus but not the spiritual ones. Then Jesus said, **All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.** All sinners who come to Jesus come by the operation of the Father. The Holy Spirit opens the way. **No man can come to me, except the Father . . . draw him.** Those who are led by Him come voluntarily.

Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. Jesus refuses no one. What a precious promise! He came to save sinners. He desires that none be lost. He never turns anyone away who wants to be saved. He never casts out after saving. No man can pluck us out of God's hand, but we can remove ourselves from His hand.

God's Will, Jesus' Purpose

John 6:38-43 Jesus' purpose is to do the Father's will. His will is that every saved one be resurrected to everlasting life. The purposes of God are all continuing and eternal. He starts nothing to destroy it. Any death and destruction that occurs is from the devil. God's plan is that no one who is saved should ever be lost.

I should lose nothing. To accomplish this, He gives them His nature through the Holy Spirit. If they obey Him, they will be fruitful. They "shall never fall" (2 Peter 1:10). One of the greatest truths is that Christ receives all sinners who come, cleanses them from sin, and keeps them. It is beyond explanation, but it is blessedly true. There is no other haven open to all. There is no other who sets no limits to the depth he will go to lift one up. (Read Isaiah 1:18; Hebrews 7:25.)

No Person Excluded

Acts 10:34-35 When God led Peter to the house of Cornelius, a Roman soldier, He taught him a truth he had not known before. Peter said, **Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons.** No person means more to God than any other. Some He can bless more because they yield to Him more. But He loves all equally. **In every nation**—Peter had thought the Jewish nation only was favored by God. Now he sees that ALL people are **accepted with him** on the same terms—**he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness.** High or low, rich or poor, intelligent or ignorant—God loves all. He offers to all the same full salvation and inheritance. The beggar dying on the street is just as welcome as the ruler of a nation. "The Lord is . . . not

willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

Here is a truth about human relationships that Peter had never known. **God is no respecter of persons.** What a revolutionary doctrine! God had shown him that through His name everyone who believeth on Him shall receive remission of sins. As Peter spoke the words "remission of sins," the Holy Spirit fell with power on Cornelius and his Gentile friends. It was a sight so marvelous to behold that Peter and his companions could scarcely believe their eyes. For centuries the Jew had lived apart from the Gentile. Now God had declared all men equally precious in His sight, and for the first time under the Christian dispensation, He had caused the Holy Spirit to come upon men and women who were Gentiles. God always keeps His promise.

Today's lesson is a rebuke to anyone who scorns any race or social class; it is a wise lesson on the divine nature of missionary work. It records a major turning point in the spread of Christianity. It is important because it introduces the spreading of the Gospel from the Jewish to the Gentile world. It means the Gospel for everyone and the bringing of the benefits of Christ to all men.

A fact to dwell on in this lesson is that both Peter and Cornelius were men of prayer. God disclosed His purpose to them both while they were praying.

JUST A THOUGHT

**Prayer is the tiny nerve
that moves God's mighty hand.**



LESSON 9

TAKING FROM AND ADDING TO GOD'S WORD

Scripture Texts: Psalm 119:89; Deuteronomy 4:2; Revelation 22:18-19; Revelation 20:12

There is nothing modern about the doubting of God's Word. Satan cast doubt on it in Eden. Eve believed his persuasion that God did not mean it like He said it. Men have doubted God's Word ever since, doubting and calling their doubt "modern thought." Often the doubters are men and women of education who call their theories "advanced" and "scientific." They set man's wisdom as superior to God's. Paul warned Timothy against such in 1 Timothy 6:20-21.

Down through the ages, men have attempted to change God's Word by burning it, shelving it, rewriting it, trashing it, renaming it, degrading it, and bringing it down to man's level. But it still stands, unchanged, as God's inspired truth.

If we give serious thought to these Scriptures in our lesson, we will find that they are sufficient to show clearly God's attitude toward His Word in relationship to man. Today's lesson is a warning from God.

MEMORY VERSE: Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.
—Proverbs 30:6

God's Word Is Unchangeable

Psalm 119:89 God's "word is truth" (John 17:17). Truth is eternal. Truth never changes. Therefore, God's Word never changes. It is **forever . . . settled in heaven**. There is but one revealed truth concerning the Gospel. Since it is established out of man's reach and in the mind of God, man cannot change the Word itself. All he can do is change his opinion of it and his teaching of it. A person whose views differ from those taught in God's Word should not be heeded.

There are many ways of changing God's Word. One may add to it or subtract from it by: (1) teaching as necessary, rules not commanded there, or as unnecessary, those which are commanded there; (2) forming creeds and rules by which people are to live; (3) emphasizing certain doctrines out of Biblical proportions; (4) looking to other sources than the Bible for spiritual authority such as to denominational heads, traditional teachings, or to an admired

person; (5) disregarding Bible teachings as non-essential; or (6) calling the Bible a human book, thus taking away its divine authority. There are other ways, and we must avoid every last one of them.

We Shall Not Add Nor Subtract

Deuteronomy 4:2 Because it is God's Word, its commands have His authority behind them. Because we are His creation, we owe Him love, reverence, respect, and obedience. Reverence for Him includes reverence for His Word. Because of this respect, we will fear and shun laying our hands on His commands to profane them. (Read Deuteronomy 12:32.) Besides this, we have His clear direction against it, **Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it.** Why? For one thing, **that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD.** If we are to obey His commands, we must know them as He gave them. We must pass them on to others unchanged.

Our day sees many new versions of the Bible. Some are translations, and some are interpretations or paraphrases. The Bible books were originally written in Hebrew (the Old Testament) and in Greek (the New Testament). A translation is a transfer from the Hebrew and Greek into the words of another language. For us, this is English. If the work is well done, the English words are the nearest possible counterpart of the original. A paraphrase is an attempt to give in other words the meaning as the writer understands it. A paraphrase has much more likelihood of being changed or limited by the writer's thinking than has a translation.

God's hand is on His Word; it cannot be destroyed. The Bible teaches the basic truths of God and Satan, Heaven and hell, sin and salvation, and how to know God and live in such a way as to reach Heaven. We want the very words God gave. The King James Version is the most accurate translation.

Penalties for Adding or Subtracting

Revelation 22:18-19 To change God's Word is to change one's own destiny. God gave this warning specifically to John at the end of the Revelation, but it permeates all the rest of the Bible. God's Word has authority which no human has the right to touch. To do so brings upon the meddler the **plagues** or curses named throughout the Bible. Terrifying as this punishment is, it is not all. Taking away from God's Word brings loss of its joys in this life and of the blessings of Heaven and loss of one's part in **the book of life** where his name must be if he is to enter Heaven. (Read Revelation 20:15.) Changing

God's Word is serious indeed when it results in such great loss as eternal separation from God.

God has prepared His Book and given it over to mankind to handle as they will. It is possible to do most anything with it—believe and follow or disbelieve, ignore, contradict, blaspheme, distort, ridicule, twist, burn, prohibit, deny, and defy. One thing they cannot do is escape judgment for their handling of it. (Read Matthew 24:35.) Doubters and believers alike will meet God's Word at the Judgment and receive the consequences for their use of it. God gave His Word for our salvation (2 Timothy 3:15). If we neglect or refuse to use it to accomplish this, what are we doing to our own best good?

The Standard of the Judgment

Revelation 20:12 And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. As the laws of the state are the standard by which the accused in our courts are judged, so the books of God—the Bible and the Book of Life—are the standard by which we will be judged when we stand before God. If the truth of this struck in full force on our consciousness, what care we would use to measure to each requirement! (Read 2 Corinthians 7:11.) But Satan draws a curtain of obscurity and tells us we can suit God's Word to our situation, that the interpretations of men are just as good, and even that certain men have the right to change the Bible. Do not be fooled by his trickery. He is a liar from the beginning.

Why Change It?

Why should any person wish to change God's Word? Some reasons are: (1) to make its practice more pleasing to the flesh (see Romans 8:13); (2) to quiet the conscience as to its obligations and warnings (will we not meet them anyway; see 2 Chronicles 36:16); and (3) to gain a following by presenting a new teaching. Satan's purpose is to overthrow God's authority and cheat us of His blessings. The Bible is given as the means to our eternal salvation.

JUST A THOUGHT

**A modest dress will not make a spiritual woman,
but a spiritual woman will make a modest dress.**

LESSON 10

THE WORD OF GOD IS POWERFUL

Scripture Texts: 1 Peter 1:22-25; 2:1-3

The Bible is neither a charm nor an idol. The Bible was not given to us to worship but to obey, that we may grow thereby. Have we grown? Are we strong spiritually? Is our soul being filled with the fullness of God? Are we getting to know Him better? Are we finding more commands and promises and walking in them? The Bible will open these ways to us. It is food for the soul. It is milk for the young and meat for the mature saint.

God's Word, the Bible, is inspired, true, eternal, and powerful to bring men to conviction and salvation. To exercise its power, the Word must fall into good ground, a heart responsive to its teaching and yielding to its Author. As the rain makes the earth bring forth, so God's Word, falling on a heart that's absorbed by it, brings forth fruit unto God (Isaiah 55:10-11).

MEMORY VERSE: Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. —Matthew 22:29

What Is the Bible?

What is the Bible? Some call it writings of men. Some say it grew from the experiences of men as they lived and learned. If that were so, it would be faulty, as all men are. It would have to be revised frequently, like school textbooks, when new knowledge is gained. But it is always up to date, always suits our present needs.

If it were the work of men, why would it condemn man in his natural state, which it does in both the Old and New Testaments? (See Jeremiah 17:9-10; Luke 13:3.) Why would it predict his downfall? It is natural to man to predict his success. (See Psalm 9:17.) Why would it make man accountable to God rather than to himself?

1 Peter 1:22-23 What is the Bible? Here it is called **the word of God and the truth through the Spirit**. The soul is **purified by obeying the truth through the Spirit**. When a person reads or hears the Bible, the Holy Spirit impresses upon his heart the promises and commands of God. He convicts the conscience of sin (John 16:8). When the man heeds the conviction, believes the promises, and obeys the commands, he is stepping into the Spirit's realm. He is **obeying the truth through the Spirit**. He is made a new

creature in Christ and is ready to testify to it in water baptism. By an act of God in him, he is born into the Kingdom of God, born of the Spirit. Now he can use the love of God that he has been given to **love one another with a pure heart fervently**. The tool by which this comes about is God's Word. Therefore, the man is **born again . . . by the word of God**.

The Word Endureth

1 Peter 1:23-25 God's Word is an **incorruptible** seed. It can never die, wear out, or become out of date. It is called "the seed" in the Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:11). When it falls into good soil in a heart, it grows, for it is living. It **liveth and abideth for ever**. Look at these two words: live and abide. The Gospel is not a dead, stiff thing. It is alive, it breathes the air of Heaven; it has heart and hope and pain and joy in it, and it moves with power (Luke 4:32).

Our **flesh is as grass**. Our bodies grow old, weaken, and die. The Bible is not like this. It **endureth for ever**. Peter wanted his readers to know exactly what he meant by **the word of the Lord** or **the word of God**. He said, "It is what I have been preaching to you when I preached the Gospel." It is the Bible (which contains the Gospel) that is "the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16).

We cannot expect to be strong Christians if we neglect God's Word. Much of the weakness of God's people is a lack of knowledge of His Word. Can you think of some reasons for this lack? Where can we start to increase its study? It is in the home where God commands that His Word be taught diligently (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Ephesians 6:4). Although Sunday school is an effective means of teaching, it can never take up the slack the home leaves.

Set Priorities in Order

1 Peter 2:1 Laying aside—there is always a **laying aside** when one is saved. All that is connected with sin must go. The self-life must die, and the Christ-life takes its place. Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ [dead]" (Galatians 2:20). The attitudes here to be laid aside—**malice . . . guile . . . hypocrisies . . . envies . . . evil speakings**—are all of the flesh. They must all be renounced before the Bible can be a power for good in our lives. The renouncing is done by repentance.

Growth of Newborn Soul Is Essential

1 Peter 2:2-3 When repentance is finished and trust is placed in Jesus Christ, the soul is **newborn**. The newly converted one is alive, healthy, and holy, but still a baby in Christ. He needs to grow. How? **Desire the sincere milk of the word**. God's Word is food for the soul. It is called both "milk" and "meat" in Hebrews 5:12-14. The Lord, through the Holy Spirit, takes the same Word and supplies milk to the babes and meat to the more mature saints. The Holy Spirit knows which is essential in each one.

Babies are born hungry for natural food. Souls are reborn hungry for spiritual food. Days of crisis lay ahead for both. If the baby's hunger is fed properly, he continues to grow. The hungry soul is fed by hearing and reading God's Word and being obedient to it, thus growing in grace and becoming strong spiritually. One grows **IF so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious**. It is only a living soul that can grow. A baby puts everything in its mouth. A newborn soul also grasps eagerly for food. This desire comes from God, not from our efforts to work up an appetite. A saved person grasps at every bit of spiritual food and knowledge.

The Bible Is Spirit and Life

The Bible was not given to us to worship but to obey. Its power is not in the book, but in the Words in the book. The book is but paper and ink; the Words are "spirit" and "life" (John 6:63). All should fear to dishonor its statements and its Words. The Bible is a path to God. It is a pattern for building a house that will not fall. To know the Bible only is to die. To come to know the God of the Bible is to live (2 Corinthians 3:6).

The Bible has power to: (1) convict us of sin, (2) reveal Christ and His salvation, (3) lead us into communion with the Spirit of God, (4) lead us in right daily living, (5) prepare us for Heaven, and (6) convince others.

JUST A THOUGHT

**What really matters is
what happens *in* us, not *to* us.**



LESSON 11

THE HOLY SPIRIT PROMISED

Scripture Text: Acts 1:1-14

The world needed the Gospel. Why did Jesus not allow His disciples to begin immediately to carry it to them? Because they had to wait until they were baptized with the Holy Spirit. They needed His power, love, wisdom, and insight. They were spiritually blind, ignorant, and weak. We are the same without Holy Spirit baptism. We need not wait, as they, for these attributes. A saved person need wait only long enough to dedicate himself fully to God, and the Spirit will come in.

We are trying in these studies to find points that will help us, the church of today, to better serve the Lord. This is the most important—that each one is baptized with the Holy Spirit. No one is properly equipped to work in the Gospel until he has this filling.

MEMORY VERSE: But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

—Acts 1:8

Jesus Proved Himself Alive

We live in a day in which many people have little regard for the significance of scriptural belief. What does it matter what a man believes, many say, provided he is sincere? Well, the answer to that is that godliness will rest upon no other foundation but spiritual truth. Faith is more than belief, but there can be no true faith without belief.

Acts 1:1-3 Jesus **shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs**. There was no question but that Jesus had risen from the dead. He was seen and heard many times by the Apostles during the forty days since He rose. Now it was time for Him to leave them, and He had some very essential, last-minute commands for them.

Acts 1:4-5 **Being assembled** with the Apostles near Bethany (Luke 24:50), Jesus gave them a command and a promise. They were to **not depart from Jerusalem, but wait** for something. He explained, **ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence**. He would send **the promise of the Father** (as in John 14:16, 26; John 15:26).

Acts 1:6-7 The Apostles were not as interested in that as in earthly, material matters. Their thoughts were of the flesh rather than the Spirit. Palestine was under rule of a foreign power—Rome. In their minds were thoughts that Jesus had come to free Israel from this domination. They thought the time had arrived. **Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?** They thought Jesus had come to set up an earthly kingdom. But Jesus closed the door on this false assumption. **It is not for you to know the times or the seasons.** His future plans are **in his own power.** They would find the answer to this question clearly when they received the Holy Spirit. When He comes, He brings the answer to many questions men never find without His guiding. The Holy Spirit wants us to know the answer.

The Important Thing

Acts 1:8 Then Jesus drew their minds back to the thing that really mattered. **Ye shall receive power.** Here they received the promise of that which would prove so essential to all who would be a disciple of Christ. They needed power of understanding, of wisdom, of love, of faith, of influence, power over sin and the flesh. These and more would be given. They were to receive the source of power. The **Holy Ghost** was to **come upon** them. **And ye shall be witnesses unto me**—Christ—everywhere. This is what the church is—witnesses unto Jesus Christ to the entire world. We are not spectators, pleasure seekers, entertainers, actors—but witnesses. First, **ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria**—at home—**and unto the uttermost**—other—**part of the earth.** This means at home and abroad.

Every activity of the church should be carried on contributing to the effectiveness of this witnessing. Real witnessing is the most heroic work there is. Dead to self and fired with the passion to rescue souls for Him, witnesses have endured neglect, hardship, heat, cold, imprisonment, torture, and death. They are glad to do it for the sake of bringing glory to the Savior's name.

A Message From God

Acts 1:9-11 **While they beheld, he was taken up.** It was visible, not secret, and another proof of His deity. He could not return to Heaven by way of death, for, having risen, He could not die again (Romans 6:9). His body was deathless and everlasting, as ours will be at the Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20, 53-54). **And a cloud received him**—hid Him.

They looked steadfastly—they were absorbed in awe and wonder. **Two**

men stood by them in white apparel—messengers from God appeared. **Why stand ye gazing?** It was because they did not know where Jesus had gone, what He would do, or if He was coming back. Jesus had talked about this before, but their minds were darkened beyond understanding. It was a message from God, for only God could know. They could not now be mistaken or wonder about His whereabouts. They had the assurance of these facts.

They Continued in Prayer

Acts 1:12-14 Assured, **then returned they unto Jerusalem from . . . Olivet.** They were obeying Jesus' command (verse 4). **They went up into an upper room, where abode** all the Apostles except Judas Iscariot (Matthew 27:5). The eleven Apostles, the women who came along from Galilee (Matthew 27:55-56), and Jesus' relatives, **continued with one accord**—unity, agreement—**in prayer and supplication.** They were drawing near to God while waiting for HIS PROMISE.

With no command but to wait, why did they pass the time in prayer? They did this because they wanted to. These were people who had their sins forgiven. Their hearts hungered to obey God, to have more of Him. When we are in the same attitude of heart as they, God will fill and use us.

JUST A THOUGHT

**No other activity welds fellowship
like working together.**



LESSON 12

A HOUSE NOT MADE WITH HANDS

Scripture Texts: 2 Corinthians 4:14-18; 2 Corinthians 5:1-5

God has both love and wrath in His nature. He is merciful to the repentant but severe with the unrepentant. To be taken to Heaven, have a never-dying spiritual body, and live forever with God, we must be saved from sin and be holy in this life. This life is full of things and circumstances we would like to change. There is poverty, illness, injustice, hardship, irritations, and disappointments.

What do these distressing circumstances do to us? Which are master, they or we? It depends upon the strength there is within. Are we sufficient of ourselves or need we other strength? If so, where can we get it? What really makes the difference between despair and victory?

MEMORY VERSE: For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. —2 Corinthians 5:1

The Resurrection

2 Corinthians 4:14 Paul had been telling the church at Corinth of his great care for them and his sacrificial service that they might have the same salvation and blessings which he enjoyed. He described somewhat the life of Christ in his heart which sustained him. He spoke of the hope to which he looked forward in faith.

He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also. Christ's Resurrection guarantees that His redeemed people will rise also. Christ became "the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20). "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19). What great hope we find in this precious promise! How will God raise them? "By His own power" (1 Corinthians 6:14).

We are told that if the Spirit of Him that raised Jesus from the dead dwell in you, then God "shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit" (Romans 8:11). This is the first resurrection. This is the resurrection from the death of sin. We must have it to have a part in eternal life in Heaven. (See John 14:19.)

Living for Eternal Values

2 Corinthians 4:15-18 Paul's work was preaching the Gospel. In so doing, he suffered many things. His labors were for a threefold purpose: (1) he worked and suffered for the sake of the people that they might know Christ, (2) that God might be glorified by their thanksgiving, and (3) that both he and they might be resurrected to spend eternity with God. By keeping his vision on **the abundant grace . . . the glory of God . . . the exceeding and eternal weight of glory** and **the things which are not seen** but which **are eternal**, Paul was able to bear and rise above the trials, perplexities, and persecutions of his life. He had continual victory over them. He said, **we faint not . . . the inward man is renewed day by day**. He called his affliction **light**. They were turned about to produce an **eternal weight of glory**. The moment a person is born, his mortal man begins to die. The moment he is born again, the spiritual man begins to live eternally. Paul did as we must do. He lifted his eyes from the daily troubles and fixed them on the invisible, eternal goal. His vision was not an empty wish because he had a living hope within him.

The New Body

2 Corinthians 5:1 What did Paul tell us he saw as he looked? The time (coming so soon to all of us) when **our earthly house of this tabernacle** would be **dissolved**—when his body would die. He did not feel it to be a loss. He considered it an exchange for something better: **a building of God**. God made Adam's body with death already in the plan of God. Romans 8:20 tells us, "For the creature was made subject to vanity ['frailty'; *The Emphatic Greek Diaglott*]." Before the fall of man, God told Adam to "replenish the earth" (Genesis 1:28). God never ordained for man to live eternally here in our frail bodies, but rather for him to receive one "fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Philippians 3:21) that is designed to dwell **eternal in the heavens**, living forever.

2 Corinthians 5:2 Death is real; death is an enemy (1 Corinthians 15:26). Why then did Paul face death with such confidence? (Read 2 Timothy 4:6-8.) The power of death was gone. It meant no more separation from God. It now was the only means by which he could cross over from his labors here to receive his payday. Why do saints look with peace and even joy toward death? It is because of what follows death: **To be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven**.

Some fear death for what will follow: "It is appointed unto men once to

die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). The heathens, who know not Jesus Christ, look at death with no hope of eternal life, yet they feel that continued existence follows death. They often make what pitiful provision they can for the poor departed one by burying with him articles or images of food, utensils, weapons, etc. These temporal things will be of no help or comfort to him. What hope do YOU have beyond death?

2 Corinthians 5:2-4 The **groan** of pain, affliction, and failure of the body is heard often in hospitals, homes, and many places. Always, silent cries are going up from the sick, crippled, aging, and dying. A cry for what? To be freed from the grip of death which is upon us all. **To be clothed** with a new and better body. (See Romans 8:21-23.) **Not for that we would be unclothed**, that is, we desire not to lose our body but to gain a better one, not to die but to live after death. **Not be found naked**. Many will be. If, when one lays down to die, there is no treasure in Heaven from which to build or clothe a new one, if there is no holiness in one's account, then all that remains is nakedness.

Jesus gave John a message for the congregation at Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-18). They thought themselves in need of nothing, but Jesus said, "Thou art wretched . . . and naked: I counsel thee to buy . . . that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear." Oh, praise God! Praise Him forever for Jesus Who made it possible for us to live forever.

When the trumpet sounds, and the earth is devoured in flames, and our bodies are changed for never-dying ones, will we be found naked or clothed? We can be sure. This old song of Zion expresses it very well: "*When He shall come with trumpet sound, Oh, may I then in Him be found; Dressed in His righteousness alone, Faultless to stand before the throne. On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand, All other ground is sinking sand.*"

JUST A THOUGHT

**Every person is a citizen of two worlds,
the natural and the spiritual world.**



LESSON 13

THE DAY OF THE LORD

Scripture Text: 2 Peter 3:1-14

A day is coming when the earth will be destroyed and people judged and separated, some to Heaven and some to hell. Our preparation is to be always blameless before God.

A great event is described in this lesson. In all the great events of earth, none can compare with it except the Creation. Why do people look upon it as they do? Some fear. Others look with longing toward the hour of Christ's coming, the time of "the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:23). They say with John, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20).

Another essential of this day will be the **day of judgment**. (Read Matthew 25:31-34.) What will be done with those judged? Our Scripture readings contain the answer to this.

MEMORY VERSE: Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. —Matthew 24:42

What Scoffers Say

2 Peter 3:1-4 Peter, because of his great love for those "that have obtained like precious faith . . . through . . . Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:1), wrote this letter of warning to stir up their carefulness.

There have always been **scoffers**. Some disbelieved Jesus at His First Coming. Now others disbelieve He will come again. God foretold this of **the last days**. Scoffers will increase as Christ's coming draws nearer and is preached more. The scoffers are a sign of the truth of God's Word. They scoff because they are **walking after their own lusts**. Not wanting to be disturbed, they deny what they fear. They argue that as the world has been, it will continue to be.

By the Word of God

2 Peter 3:5-7 The scoffers **willingly are ignorant** (the worst kind of ignorance) of the power of **the word of God**. They stubbornly or carelessly close their eyes. Here is stated: (1) God's creation of the heavens and earth,

by the word of God—this is true creation, making them out of nothing by the pure act of His will, (2) His bringing of the Flood, by which He **overflowed** the world **with water**, (3) the coming destruction of **the heavens and the earth by fire**, (4) **the day of judgment**, and (5) the punishment of the **ungodly**. God's acts in the past are evidence that He will do as He promises in the future.

God's Time Is Different Than Man's

2 Peter 3:8-9 Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing. God is not governed by time as we are. **A thousand years or one day** means all the same to Him. He is waiting only to give us a chance to be saved. He is **long-suffering to us-ward** because He is **not willing that any should perish**. This shows that salvation is provided for ALL, not just a chosen class. He desires **that all should come to repentance**. That not all are saved is only because not all repent and believe on Christ. Notice 2 Peter 3:15. The Lord's delay "is salvation"; it is a space in time providing man an opportunity to repent and get ready for the day of His coming.

Will It Be Secret?

2 Peter 3:10 The day of the Lord is one day, not two or several. "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice. And shall come forth" (John 5:28-29). These are both the good and the evil-doers, all resurrected at the same hour. **As a thief in the night**—at an unexpected time. "But of that day and hour knoweth no man . . . Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (Matthew 24:36, 42).

Although that day will be unexpected, it need not catch us unawares. "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light . . . but let us watch and be sober" (1 Thessalonians 5:4-6). What will there be? **A great noise . . . fervent heat**—both will be intense. The **heavens**, the **elements**, the **earth** and its **works** will be destroyed—**burned up**, not burned over.

Have you heard that Jesus will secretly catch away the church someday and that this will be unknown to the unsaved who will be left on earth? This teaching is called "the rapture." There is no Bible Scripture supporting this teaching. Consider these: (1) both the wise and the foolish virgins went together for the marriage (Matthew, Chapter 25); (2) in the same hour, ALL in the graves will come forth in the Resurrection (John 5:28-29); (3) in the Parable of the Tares, the "tares," or "things that offend," will be gathered to-

gether first before the "wheat" (Matthew, Chapter 13); and (4) "and every eye shall see him" (Revelation 1:7). To have a secret coming would necessitate more than one coming. There is no such coming mentioned in the Bible.

What Preparation Must We Make?

2 Peter 3:11-14 All these things shall be dissolved. No possessions left, no material things to trust in. When all material things are gone, one really needs the right spiritual resources. What we are now is building the foundation we will stand on then. To have a solid foundation, our lives must be **in all holy conversation**—right conduct in all ways—**and godliness**—like God who lives within. This covers both one's outward and inward life. If we are thus, we will be **looking for and hasting unto His coming**. Our affections will be set on things above. If we are to "love his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8), we must be **diligent**—it takes care, desire, and determined watchfulness that Christ will find us ready. In peace—the peace Jesus said He gives (John 14:27). **Without spot**—with a pure heart unspotted by sin or the world (Matthew 5:8; James 1:27). **Blameless**—with no unforgiven sins. In and out, we must be clean for God's eye. Only He can make us clean. He will if we come to Him in repentance and trust (1 John 1:9).

Nevertheless—even though this is the end of the earth and heavens that we see and the dispensation in which we now live, yet it is not the end of God's dealings with us and provision for us. God's plan for His people is "life eternal," and the wicked "shall go away into everlasting punishment" (Matthew 25:46). All people are in one group or the other—righteous or wicked.

We are told, in part, what hell will be like, but of Heaven we know little. We do know that it will not be ruined by sin. Sinners will not be there to spoil it. But whatever is in the hands of God will be good.

JUST A THOUGHT

**Footprints on the sands of time
were not made sitting down.**



NOTES

**These lessons are adapted from lessons by Mary Lehmann.
Revised and published with written permission from
© Bible Paths Publications
P.O. Box 299
Keithville, LA 71047**

**This quarterly has been published by
The Church of God, God's Acres
675 N. Cedar Street
Newark, OH 43055
GodsAcres.org**

**For copies of this quarterly, contact:
The Gospel Trumpeter
Attn: Sunday School Dept.
675 N. Cedar Street
Newark, OH 43055**

**Compiled and edited by
Ralph and Dorothy Craig
April 1995**