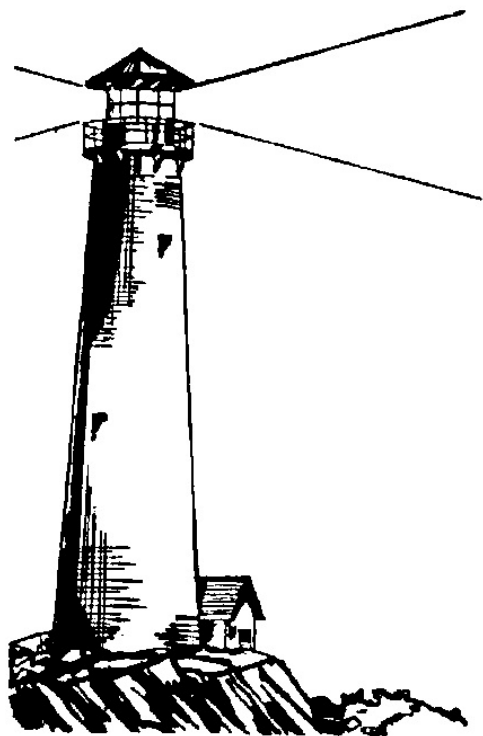


CHURCH OF GOD

SUNDAY SCHOOL QUARTERLY



CHRISTIAN WARFARE

CHRISTIAN WARFARE

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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

COMMANDER IN CHIEF

Scripture Texts: Ephesians 1:20-23; John 14:1-6; Hebrews 1:8; 9:24-28

Did you ever wonder why there is so much spiritual defeat among the people today? It is because man without God is nothing. This series of lessons is arranged in hope of helping to prepare a people for the hardship of Christian warfare. We hope to cause people to see who our enemy really is, the weapons he uses, and what we must do to prepare for victory over this enemy.

MEMORY VERSE: The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.
—John 3:35

Jesus, the Sure Rock

God has given His Son all power (Matthew 28:18). As Commander in Chief of His army, He calls, recruits, chooses, prepares, trains, sends, supplies, empowers, motivates, directs, and leads us. It is all Christ. We are only tools for Him to use.

Ephesians 1:20-23 We cannot have confidence without something to place confidence in. We cannot be courageous without a foundation to rest courage upon. There must be something to trust. Without a source of strength, courage is an empty boast that fails. In Jesus Christ, a saint has a foundation rock for confidence. Living in Him, we can have assurance even in the midst of trials, discouragements, and persecutions. He is the Rock from which we draw our strength (1 Corinthians 10:4), the Rock upon which the church is built (Matthew 16:18), the Rock of our salvation (Psalm 89:26), the Rock who is a "stumbling stone" and "offence" to rebellious sinners but a mighty bulwark to believers (Romans 9:33), and the Rock upon which we can build and be safe in the storm (Matthew 7:24-25). Friend, anchor now in Jesus, and you can say when the storm strikes, "But the LORD is my defence; and my God is the rock of my refuge" (Psalm 94:22).

Jesus, the Only Leader

When Jesus was on earth He wrote that the whole world was "in wickedness" (1 John 5:19). A look around in our time shows that it has not changed.

It appears to be sinking deeper and deeper into sin. Second Timothy 3:13 warns that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."

Evil forces are crowding in upon us. Communism is moving ever nearer as it grasps one area after another. The National and World Councils of Churches, influenced by modernism and humanism, are working for a "one world church" to dominate the field of religion. Roman Catholicism is attempting to draw the Protestant denominations into her ecumenical union. Moves are being made and laws passed to cut off tax exemptions to Christians and church property. We cannot tell when great opposition and persecution may be brought upon us as it has been to Christians of other ages. We may be called upon, as others have before us, to defend our faith in Christ and perhaps seal it with our blood.

If this comes, will we be ready? Will we be good soldiers prepared to fight a good fight of faith? If so, we must have our faith anchored in the Rock, Christ Jesus, so that the storm of the enemy cannot shake it.

This is no time for fear and despair, but rather for deepened faith and determination. It is time to establish and strengthen our contact with God, our consecration to Him, and our closeness with Him. Never forget that God has given our Leader, Jesus Christ, all power.

Jesus Christ Has the Preeminence

John 14:6 Jesus saith . . . **I am the way**—the way to the Father's house, to Heaven, to union with God—**the truth**—enlightening dark places, revealing true knowledge, answering all questions—**and the life**—giving fullness of life to the dead soul, giving it His life, making that life continue forever. Jesus is the only way. There is no other. **No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.** Not by parent, preacher, priest, saint, angel, Mary, or good works. Heeding this, we are saved the despair of a fruitless search down a wrong way.

Jesus Is God, King, and High Priest

Hebrews 1:8 God is speaking to His only Son, Jesus. **Thy throne, O God**—Jesus is the "KING OF KINGS" (Revelation 19:16). He is deity. This is important to settle in our minds. We must know in Whom we are trusting and that His strength is sufficient for all our needs, or we cannot put full faith in Him. **Is for ever and ever**—eternal, never to end—**a sceptre of righteousness**—Christ's rule is righteous; He uses justice, mercy, and love.

Hebrews 9:24-28 Christ is the High Priest—the One who is able to represent man before God, to offer sacrifices for man to God, and to draw nigh to God on man's behalf. He made atonement for sin. Christ is the true antitype of the high priests of the Law. Christ did His work once for all. He made atonement for sin.

The high priests of the Law were purely human. They offered the blood of animals in a man-built holy place. They repeated the offering every year because it was insufficient to cover the need permanently. Christ is the fulfillment. He is the divine High Priest Who offered Himself **in the presence of God** just **once** because His offering was fully sufficient **to put away sin**.

Christ is dependable as a Savior. His remedy for sin is certain—as certain as death and judgment. Everything He does is perfect. He is worthy of our faith and trust.

If we are to successfully meet the hard things of life and the opposition of Satan, the very first requirement is a Savior Who can save. Do you have Him?

JUST A THOUGHT

**This life is a school of EDUCATION.
Each day brings forth a RECITATION.
Death ends the term without VACATION,
and then comes the final EXAMINATION.**



LESSON 2

THE ARTICLES OF WAR

Scripture Texts: Jude 3; Hebrews 6:17-20; 7:19; 1 Corinthians 15:22; Galatians 1:8-12; Romans 1:16-17

The Gospel is the Word of God. The Gospel is changeless and sure. The Gospel is a foundation to build lives upon, and a weapon against Satan. The Bible is the rule of faith for successful living in the Lord's army. There is no other Gospel of Christ but that which is found in the Bible. Believing and living the Gospel is the strongest fortification in time of trouble. Disobedience of any part of the Gospel brings trouble to our relationship with God and can lead to separation from God's army.

MEMORY VERSE: All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.
—2 Timothy 3:16-17

Good News

Jude 3 The Christian life is a warfare. We must fight the good fight of faith. There are strong and fierce enemies headed by the archenemy—Satan. How can we be strong to meet them? The first requirement is a perfect and absolutely dependable Savior. We have this in Jesus Christ. The second requirement is a working program of truth. We must have it as a foundation to build our lives upon, a weapon to wield against the enemy, and a guide to show the way through every situation.

Galatians 1:11-12 The Gospel is not rules and regulations that men have set up, but rules that were given and established through revelation of God through His Holy Spirit. It is our guide on how to live, how to act, how to dress, what to do, and all other aspects concerning our Christian activities. God controls all we do through His Gospel. We cannot change it or rearrange it. We just take it as it is.

The word *gospel* is used loosely these days. We hear of the "gospel of cleanliness" and "gospel of hard work" and many others. Such cannot be gospels. Gospel means "good news." Advice or a command is not news. The Gospel is something done FOR us, something that comes to us from outside of ourselves. It is a gift—unearned, undeserved, and unknown before. The

Gospel of Christ is the good news and can be summed up and briefly expressed in two words, JESUS SAVES. Since there is no other way to be saved, there is no other Gospel. The Gospel is something to believe, something to live by, and something to spread to others.

A Sure and Steadfast Hope

Hebrews 6:17-20 God wished to show that His promise was changeless. First, He gave the **promise**. Second, He swore by Himself to keep it. In both of these, **it was impossible for God to lie**. Nothing could be more sure than this. Saints are refugees. They have **fled** from Satan **for refuge** in God. They have grasped the hope in God's promise. This hope is **an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast**. The promise that gives such hope is "the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 1:1)—spiritual life for the soul now and life for a new, incorruptible body at Christ's Second Coming (1 Corinthians 15:52-54). This life will climax in union with God forever in Heaven. The promise of all this is the Gospel, the good news.

A Perfect Hope

Hebrews 7:19 Here the law and the Gospel are contrasted. When the Gospel came—when Jesus came and brought it—it was **a better hope** because it made the things of the spirit **perfect**. It made it possible for men to **draw nigh unto God**, to be united in Him. Christ as the Mediator joined men with God. How? It is by means of once suffering for sins that Christ brings us to God.

1 Corinthians 15:22 Here is a comparison and contrast. The likeness is that both death and life came by man—death by the sin of the man, Adam; life by the sacrifice of the God who became man, Jesus Christ. The contrast is that death and life are direct opposites. Sin kills the soul. This is tragic. Christ makes dead souls to live. This is Gospel. He died for all. All can be saved by accepting Christ's sacrifice.

No Other Gospel

Galatians 1:8 Paul's warning to the Galatian church shows that it is wrong to listen to, accept, or teach **any other gospel** than the true one of Jesus Christ. Paul was so sure that what he had preached was the true Gospel that he included himself and the angels in the curse for changing it. How did he know it was true? Because he received it from "Jesus Christ"

(Galatians 1:12). It was revealed to him. This is the basis and guide for all Christian activities.

A Powerful Gospel

Romans 1:16-17 The gospel of Christ . . . is the power of God unto salvation. It is the force God uses to bring about salvation. It is the spiritual law by which the process of salvation works. No one is saved by any other means. It is God's tool for building His church, which is the army of the Lord. Since there is but one Gospel, there is but one church. No one can live a victorious life by any other set of rules or by any book other than the Bible.

It Matters What We Believe

Some say beliefs do not matter just so we are sincere in them. This is to say that they are not truths but self-built, imaginary philosophies. No, beliefs mold lives. Only a life built on truth is a good life. And there is only one truth—that of God. How much power could we expect our U.S. Army to have if every soldier divided the soldiers' handbook and Articles of War as people do the Gospel of Christ? It would be as divided, unorganized, and powerless as the church world is. Disobedience brings serious trouble and leads to permanent separation from God and Christian fellowship.

JUST A THOUGHT

**We are not to add to the Bible,
nor to subtract from it,
but to rightly divide it.**

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LESSON 3

THE RECRUITING CENTER

Scripture Texts: John 3:3; Colossians 3:1-10; 2 Peter 1:4; 2 Corinthians 5:17-18

The natural person cannot successfully meet the trials and temptations of life. He has no strength to overcome them. Much less can he meet those added testings and persecutions that evil times inflict upon the saint who joins Christ in the battle for truth. No one can be victorious through this battle unless he has been made new in Christ.

MEMORY VERSE: But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.

—*John 1:12*

How to Become a New Creature

John 3:3 Except a man be born again—unless he be made new by God—he cannot be in the Church of God, is not a child of God, and cannot go to Heaven. Church joining does not put one into the Kingdom of God, nor does doing good works or enduring suffering or trying hard or being a part of a spiritual congregation. It is by repentance—by confessing our sins to God and turning away from them. It is believing on Christ as our Savior, by trusting Him to cleanse, make alive, and keep us. It is by letting go of ourselves and surrendering to Him. It is to live thereafter as He leads, to right wrongs of the past and live holy in the future. No one is drafted into the army of God. It is a completely voluntary service.

Mortify Your Members

Colossians 3:1-8 If ye then be risen with Christ—this is the resurrection of the soul or spirit. This happens when someone hears the Gospel, repents, believes on Christ, and is saved. He "is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). If you are thus risen, **seek those things which are above**—think about, love, strive to attain, let grow in your heart the Persons and virtues of Heaven, **where Christ sitteth**.

Both God and man have to do with the process of salvation. God works the inside, death and resurrection. Man regulates his outward members in

accord with it. God, on His part, by grace washes the heart clean of sin and gives life to the soul. Man, on his part, draws on the power of God to deny entrance to sinful deeds and to do righteous ones.

When individuals come to the recruiting center, they will not be chosen until they are ready to die out to earthly things and accept heavenly things. Saints love heavenly things, not earthly things, because saints are dead—"dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world" (Colossians 2:20). Death is separation. Saints are separated, cut off, from worldly things, things of the flesh, of this life only. Here is death and life. First, in repentance one dies to sin. He accepts Christ's death for him and is united with Christ in death to self. He is "baptized into his death" (Romans 6:3), (not baptism in water but into Christ's death). Second, your life is hid with Christ in God. The one who dies to sin is made alive in Christ. "If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" (Romans 6:5).

Mortify . . . your members which are upon the earth, the earthly, fleshly deeds of natural human nature. Put them to death. Why? Because we have been made alive in Christ, and we now have power over these works of the flesh. Some of these works of the flesh are **fornication, uncleanness** (impure thoughts, words, and acts that may not be actual fornication but related to it), **inordinate affection** (vehement, wrong feelings), **evil concupiscence** (strong evil desires, lusts), **and covetousness, which is idolatry** (loving possessions rather than God), . . . **anger, wrath, malice** (desires to bring evil upon another), **blasphemy** (dishonor to God), **and filthy communication**. All such must be **put off**, put to death.

A New Soldier

2 Peter 1:4 By accepting God's **great and precious promises**, we are made **partakers of the divine nature**. The old sinful nature is gone, taken away, and God's nature is given to us. We are saved from sin.

2 Corinthians 5:17 **If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature**. If we are not a new creature, we are not in Christ. Through the process called *conversion*, a man gives up his life and commits himself to God's leadership and cause from that time on. Old loves, desires, attitudes, lusts, fears, bondages, and sins of all kinds **are passed away**. In their places all things **are become new**. Inward virtues, joys, hopes, desires, loves, attitudes, and powers are of God now.

False Notions

The doctrine that one's position can be in Christ while his deeds are sinful, that Christ's righteousness is imputed unto him even though he is not righteous, that the divine nature and the sinful nature can live in him at the same time, the sinful one perhaps predominating, and still the person remain saved—no, these are false notions. Both the old man (the inner being) and his deeds (the outward doings) must be put to death. Both the new man inside and holy actions outside must unite to fill the life. Only then is a person a child of God and fit for army service for the Lord. Christ's army is made of changed lives—new men and women.

JUST A THOUGHT

**If you think you are too small to do a big thing,
try doing small things in a big way.**



LESSON 4

BASIC TRAINING

Scripture Texts: John 4:19-24; Ephesians 3:16-19; James 5:8

God requires service from the heart. True worship must be from the heart and spirit. We are not children of God unless a work of God is done in our hearts. The heart must be right and preparation made before we can be sent out on the battlefield. We must prove true in the small tests before we can be given greater responsibilities. We need to fix our hearts firmly in Jesus now to be prepared for persecution and for His coming.

MEMORY VERSE: And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.
—Luke 24:49

Inside Experience, Not Outside Form

John 4:19-24 Where should we worship? The woman's interest was aroused by Jesus' request for a drink, His offer of "living water" (verse 10), and His knowledge of her past. Perhaps this man could settle a question that may have bothered her for some time. Was worship in Samaria's mountain acceptable to God? Would it bring God's favor upon her? Would worship from Jerusalem bring more favor upon her? **Jesus saith . . . the hour cometh**—God had prescribed in the Law (Exodus 25:8-9; 2 Chronicles 6:6; 7:12-16) that worship should be in Jerusalem, first in the Tabernacle, later in the Temple. But these buildings were types of the spiritual order that was to characterize the Gospel dispensation now being brought in. In that **hour**, or dispensation, worship would be centered **neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem**. No PLACE would make worship acceptable.

Salvation is of the Jews. It was to the Jews that God had given the earlier part of His plan, which was to be fulfilled in the coming of Christ to bring salvation to all men, and make them spiritual Jews—an inside work (Romans 2:28-29). How should we worship? **The hour cometh, and now is**—right at that moment and from then on—**true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit**—in their deepest, inmost being and with their feelings, emotions, motives, and will, rather than in outward places, buildings, ritualistic forms, and furnishings . . . **and in truth**—in reality, honestly, without hypocrisy, *felt* rather than *said* only.

Preparation of the Heart

Christianity consists of what God does for man and of what man does for God in response. Can God need anything from the creature He has made and given His own breath? The answer is, yes. He desires his companionship. He hungers for his love. The nature of God requires worship to satisfy it. He created man for that purpose (Revelation 4:11). In fulfilling that purpose, we will find our complete salvation and deepest joy. Is there a happier thought than that we can and may bring pleasure to God? Adam and Eve enjoyed that rich companionship with God as long as their hearts were responsive to His will, but sin destroyed that sweet fellowship.

Because God used the Tabernacle and Temple and outward forms of service, we may think that in the Law dispensation He desired outward worship. No, then, as now, He looked deep into hearts to find the gift that would satisfy Him. He commanded Israel to "fear" and "love" and "serve" Him "with all thy heart and with all thy soul" (Deuteronomy 10:12). His eyes "run to and fro," seeking those "whose heart is perfect toward him" (2 Chronicles 16:9). He said, "I . . . search the heart, I try the reins" (Jeremiah 17:10). He "desirest truth in the inward parts" (Psalm 51:6).

The Basics

Ephesians 3:16-19 Paul, writing from prison, told us as beloved brethren how to be strong in the Lord and go forward to victory in the battle ahead. **Be strengthened . . . by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts . . . rooted and grounded in love . . . be filled with all the fulness of God.** None of these are an outward gift of material things. They are inside things of the heart.

James 5:8 Be ye . . . patient (bearing or enduring without complaint, expectant without discontent, not hasty, persevering, diligent, unwearied). Consider how patience fits us to fight the Christian warfare. Jesus, in warning of betrayal, persecution, and tribulation, said, "In your patience possess ye your souls" (Luke 21:19). "Patience" performs a "perfect work" (James 1:4). **Stablish your hearts**—before a hurricane, people fasten down their property, making it firm and sure, so as to withstand the coming storm.

We need life and holiness and strength to meet the challenges of daily life and the threat of the storm that is upon us. Life and strength must have a source. Indications point to the approach of an intense struggle with Satan. To endure a time of trial, temptation, and tribulation, we need the Gospel and a genuine experience of salvation. This will draw increased persecutions to

us. Satan hates the Gospel. But believing, accepting, and obeying it brings the living power of Christ into your life. A Christian's diet has much to do with his power to stand in time of battle (Hebrews 6:5). By receiving the living power of Christ, we are set free spiritually (John 8:36). He has that anchor of hope joining him with Heaven and holding him steady (Hebrews 6:19).

Friend, repent and open your heart to the Savior. Take Him. Be prepared for whatever may come.

JUST A THOUGHT

**"If one cannot find peace within,
it is useless to seek for it elsewhere." —M.F. Boyd**



LESSON 5

A GOOD SOLDIER

Scripture Texts: 1 Corinthians 2:1-5; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 4:1-9; 2 Timothy 2:3-4; 1 Peter 4:10-11

The world needs a church that has contact with God, living truth, and power. Much is called the church that is not the church. If we have not a supernatural church, we have no church at all. If God is not moving in a people, they are not the Church of God. His power in the church is evidenced by changed lives and answered prayers. Life is there. The early church was a powerful church moved by God. When God shakes off the imitations and the dust clears away, the true church will still be standing firm in Him.

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

Christ, the Power and Wisdom of God

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 Paul had come to Corinth declaring the Gospel of Christ. Now, writing later, he said he **came not with excellency of speech . . . wisdom . . . or enticing words**. Although Paul was an educated man, he did not display his learning in his preaching. Instead, he came in **weakness . . . fear, and . . . trembling**. Why? Knowledge of **Jesus Christ, and him crucified** is greater than any knowledge. The **demonstration of the Spirit and of power** is greater than anything **man's wisdom** can do. Paul cast aside his own wisdom that God might work mightily through him. The faith of the people must not be based upon the wisdom of men—Paul's reasoning powers, the drawing power of his personality, his knowledge. Their faith must be in the power of God—in what they saw God doing in Paul and others and especially in the work they felt Him doing in their own hearts. Faith in anything else could be shaken by opposite reasoning, a stronger personality, superior knowledge, or the discouragements of Satan.

We need power greater than human power to live and work for God and to be good soldiers to meet Satan's opposition. We receive the needed power from the baptism of the Holy Spirit. All we do must be done by God *through* us, not *by* us.

Power by the Grace of God

1 Corinthians 15:10 Each of us has (1) a life to live, (2) a work to do, and (3) opposition to meet. The LIFE is to be yielded to Christ for redemption and lived to glorify God. The WORK is to take the Gospel of Christ to all people. The OPPOSITION is Satan's constant attempt to destroy our LIFE and prevent our WORK from being effective. He will use all means, from common temptation and trial to the fiercest persecution. That we may carry out these three charges, God has provided an Almighty Savior, a true Gospel, a perfect salvation, and the power to do what these require.

Three times in this Scripture, Paul spoke of the grace of God. First, that grace—the free bestowal of God's life and gifts upon him—made him the man he was, gave him purity of heart and talents, and called him to be an Apostle. Second, God's grace was the source and power producing all the accomplishments of Paul's life—the souls saved, churches established, miracles wrought, and healings done (Matthew 9:6-8). Thirdly, lest some credit these to Paul's own working, he emphasized—**yet not I, but the grace of God**. This is witnessed by what Paul was, not in his own strength but through God.

2 Corinthians 4:1-9 We have this treasure—**this ministry . . . handling the word of God**, the commission to preach the Gospel—**in earthen vessels**—in human bodies and minds, compared to containers of clay, easily broken. We have power to tell men the truth even when personal harm may be at stake, when men oppose it (Micah 3:8; Romans 1:16). God uses such so **that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us**. Being human, the servant may be **troubled . . . perplexed. . . persecuted . . . cast down**. But because God is given freedom to work, the servant is **not distressed . . . not in despair . . . not forsaken . . . not destroyed**.

Peter and the other disciples presented a sorry picture of fear and defeat at Christ's Crucifixion. Afterward they bravely met threats, beatings, prison, and death. What made the difference? They had been baptized with the Holy Spirit. "Perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18). We can have the same power by having Him Who is power. There is no other way. We cannot imitate Him. We must have Him within by being saved from sin by the blood of Jesus Christ, and by yielding all to God to use as He will and opening our heart for His Spirit's entrance.

The Power to Endure

In our memory verse today, Jesus, just before leaving the world, repeated His promise of power to His disciples. This power was so necessary to their

future life and work that they must not leave Jerusalem until they had received it. This is the power we have been reading about today. All the Apostles were given it before starting their work. We must also.

2 Timothy 2:3-4 A good soldier of Jesus must endure hard things. He must be in good spiritual shape. As a natural soldier must have disruption of his family life, his daily routine, and lifestyle, so must we as good soldiers of Christ. A good soldier of God does not become so entangled with the affairs of this life that he cannot get loose to please Him Who has chosen him to be a soldier. Saints must be careful not to become entangled with legitimate things that are necessary in our everyday living.

1 Peter 4:10-11 As every man hath received the gift—the gift of the Spirit, the spiritual ability to do our part of God's work—**minister the same one to another**—do that work and so bless others. We are only stewards of the **grace of God**. We only hold these powers and gifts in trust. Whatever we do we must do **as of the ability which God giveth**, not our own. We must abase ourselves and exalt God—**that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ**. Nothing less than the power of the Holy Spirit is sufficient for these things. This was Peter's experience. It can be yours.

JUST A THOUGHT

There can be but one truth.



LESSON 6

THE UNIFORM

Scripture Text: Ephesians 6:10-18

The Christian is in a real war against Satan. Our enemies are spiritual. Our weapons must be spiritual. We must have the power of God, not our own. Faith and power are necessary to the working of each of our pieces of armor.

As each member of the Church of God seriously considers the issues of this life in Christ, he must realize that the purest strength and fortitude are necessary to worthily and successfully fight the battle that faces us. In the Book of Ephesians, God caused Paul to prepare an excellent outline of that strength and the secrets to finding it.

MEMORY VERSE: Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. —Ephesians 6:11

The Whole Armor of God

Ephesians 6:10-13 The most essential secret of receiving strength is to know that it **MUST** come from the Lord. Why do we need fighting strength? Because we have enemies, chief over them is **the devil**. Under him are **principalities** and **powers** influencing government, society, and trends of thought; **rulers of the darkness of this world**—the devil controlling the agencies of sin and evil; **spiritual wickedness in high places**—leaders who have no respect for God and His Word, who corrupt the Gospel. Men and women are the tools, but Satan is behind it all. Our soul's enemies are not **flesh and blood**—not physical to be fought with literal weapons—but spiritual. We must have spiritual weapons, **the whole armour of God**. These equip us to **withstand** Satan's agents in the evil day—time of severe attack. **And having done all** that is possible for us to do, or having overcome all, **to stand**—to hold firm, to keep our faith in God. Sometimes we must stand still that we may see the power of God and hold our spiritual position.

We are in enemy country. Satan is the god of this world and the whole world is in wickedness. Paul exhorted us to fight the good fight of faith. Faith is a spiritual weapon which the enemy cannot handle.

Where does the strength of a Christian lie? If it is not a borrowed strength, it is no strength at all. Only as we yield up our own little power and

look to God to supply us, can we have any effect against the enemy. Trying in our own strength only hinders God. His strength is made perfect in our weakness as we give up our strength to take His (2 Corinthians 12:9). Can we in any other way come through temptation, tribulation, persecution, and death victoriously?

The Armor of Defense

The five defensive pieces of armor are named first. A soldier is identified by the uniform he wears and the weapons he uses. This is so with the Christian. The Christian's equipment is the best and the most up to date. Paul looked at the armor worn by the soldier guarding him and was reminded of the Christian soldier's armor, which he outlined in our lesson today.

Ephesians 6:14 To **stand** we must be **girt about with truth**, encircled with it, holding the rest of the armor in place. God is true, His Word is truth, His truth sets free, and truth is strong and eternal. The **breastplate** is **righteousness**—the quality of being right, without sin. **Righteousness**, not one's own but the holiness imparted by God, protects the spiritual heart from death through sin.

Ephesians 6:15 **Feet** are for going. Soldiers wore brazen boots to protect the feet and legs and enable them to travel in hard places. The spiritual feet of a saint are his going forth with **the gospel of peace** to give it to others at home and afar (Isaiah 52:7). The peace is inner peace, the peace of God in the heart that God gives even in the midst of outer turmoil. The Gospel is both the saint's protection and his message. It is not just the bare facts of Christ's death and resurrection to save us. It is the **preparation** of this, the Gospel accepted into one's heart, lived, grown, beautified, made visible, and living. Doctrine alone is not nearly so powerful in winning souls as doctrine demonstrated and adorned by the beauty of a holy life (Titus 2:10).

Ephesians 6:16 **Above all**—most important—**taking the shield of faith**. The shield was held in front of one, protecting the whole body. Faith is spiritual protection against Satan. Why is faith **above all**? Because it is the belief that grasps the supply of the grace of God. By it all other pieces are made effective. Without faith, no grace can be active in our lives. With it we turn aside **all the fiery darts of the wicked one**.

Ephesians 6:17a The **helmet** protects the head. The head is the director of the body, the seat of understanding. **Salvation**, the spiritual helmet, gives purpose and worth and a goal to the direction of the life. It opens the understanding to truth. It protects from wandering in error.

The Weapons of Offense

Ephesians 6:17b One offensive weapon named is **the sword of the Spirit**. A sword is to kill and destroy the enemy. The sword referred to here is the spiritual sword, **the word of God**, the Bible. It is most dangerous, spiritually, for us to attempt to use the Spirit's sword without proper supervision by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit inspired it (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21). The Holy Spirit enables us to teach it (1 Peter 4:10-11). The Holy Spirit brings the hearer to understand and obey it (1 Corinthians 2:10-11). The Bible is a weapon to kill sin and destroy the work of Satan (Hebrews 4:12).

Ephesians 6:18 Praying always. Another offensive weapon is continual communion with God. Prayer is the motivating power that keeps all the defensive armor active and effective. It is the means by which faith reaches to God to bring His help. Faith prompts prayer, and prayer increases faith, producing constant nourishment, life, and growth. Prayer **MUST** be **in the Spirit**. We should pray for saints to hold true and sinners to be saved.

Can we use the Bible if we do not know the Bible? How can we and our children come to know it? Can we leave them to face greater blasphemies and fiercer persecutions than we ever faced without knowledge of how to withstand them? The little teaching of Sunday school is not enough. Where does God lay the burden of learning and teaching His Word? (Ephesians 6:4; Deuteronomy 6:6-7).

Satan is waging savage, worldwide war against God and His church. When his evil artillery is suddenly turned on us, will we meet him in God's armor and wielding God's sword? Will our faith and prayers make our fight effective?

JUST A THOUGHT

**The average man can do more harm
with his mouth than with a gun.**

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LESSON 7

READY FOR SERVICE

Scripture Texts: Matthew 10:1-8; Mark 16:15-20; Psalm 126:5-6; 1 Peter 4:10-11

When Jesus told the Apostles they would be His witnesses, He told them to spread the good news of salvation. This same commission is directed to every soldier of Christ today. The work of Jesus is the teaching of the kingdom throughout the world. No one has the power to go forth and witness until he has received power of the Holy Ghost (Acts 1:8). God has entrusted part of His own life and qualities to His people. He comes in to work and live in human hearts. We must account to Him for our handling of this gift.

MEMORY VERSE: And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

—*Matthew 24:14*

Christ Gives Power to Witness

Matthew 10:1-8 Christ called His disciples. He chose twelve for special work. We are called out under the same conditions. All God's work is special. He ordained them, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to witness for Him. He gave them power against unclean spirits. These spirits are demons and have greater power than humans. No human can withstand them without the power of God. And He gave them power to heal—neither can a human do this in his own power. All were common working men, "unlearned and ignorant" (Acts 4:13).

Go not into the way of the Gentiles . . . Samaritans. This was a temporary command for this trip. Paul afterward was to go to the Gentiles, adding that God commanded that "salvation" be taken "unto the ends of the earth" (Acts 13:46-47).

Preach . . . The kingdom of heaven is at hand—it was even then being set up. It was being set up in hearts—"the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). It is "not of this world" (John 18:36), not a thing of nations, armies, or material things. It is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17). What a message we have to deliver to the world! **Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils**—not only are these spiritual works, but also they can be seen with the natural eye.

Christ Commanded "Go"

Mark 16:15-20 Near the time of His Ascension Jesus gave instruction to His disciples, and it is our instruction also. **Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.** No one is to be left out. They were to start, and we are to follow and carry on until all is finished. This charge is laid upon all the church. It takes brave people to be trusted soldiers for Christ. Just anyone will not do. Witnessing begins at home, then to the neighbors, and finally to the whole world. We may, as Jesus did, receive the least honor from our own people.

Before we will be entrusted with the large, or the most important work, we must learn to be faithful in the smaller things God will ask us to do. Jesus always works with His people, never sends them alone. With this command, He promised some signs that would follow them that believe. Beware of work being done where the signs go before, exalting man (healing campaigns). He promised power to cast out devils, speak with new tongues (languages), heal the sick, and immunity to snakebite and other poisons (accidentally received). These were to be had by faith in Jesus' name.

Reward for Our Labor

Psalm 126:5-6 **They that sow in tears**—in sacrifice, hardship, opposition, or persecution—**shall reap in joy**, the joy of winning souls to the Master. To do this, we must carry precious seed, the truth of the Gospel. No "social gospel," or human creed, or theory of developing the good in man, or mere suffering will do. It must be the living message of salvation through Jesus' blood by faith and repentance.

In the memory verse for today Jesus states, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world . . . unto all nations." This is in accord with the prophecy in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. "The stone . . . became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (Daniel 2:34-35, 44). The Kingdom of God will be victorious and will stand forever. What part will we have in this victory?

To God Be the Glory

1 Peter 4:10-11 As we have received, so we are to minister. Whatever gift, ability, or opportunity God gives us is to be used. Our purpose in using is to serve others of the church or of the world. The end goal is to bring profit to the Lord. The gifts are grace. They are of the life of God—portions of

His power, ability, and nature put into us. They are made up of many forms—teaching, preaching, faith, healing, wisdom, discernment, governing ability, and many others. They are not limited to the nine Paul mentioned in 1 Corinthians, Chapter 12. Any tool God supplies and enables us to use for service is part of His manifold grace. We are caretakers of them. We must be good stewards.

We must exercise our gift with the ability that God gives. Look to Him, not ourselves, for ability. Lean on Him; ask for His leading and help. Jesus said, "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). The end purpose is that God may be glorified. When we are used in service and others are benefitted, when God gets the glory, then the grace is working as planned. "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal" (1 Corinthians 12:7).

JUST A THOUGHT

What message do you carry? By what authority?



LESSON 8

FACING THE ENEMY

Scripture Texts: Mark 3:1-6; Acts 13:6-12; Matthew 10:16-36

The work of the church is to seek and to save the lost. Christ instructs those He sends and tells them that all will meet persecution. He tells us this so that we will know what to expect.

First of all, we must know who our enemy really is. Spiritual discernment is very needful. The devil may attack as a roaring lion or come as a wolf in sheep's clothing. He is spoken of as an angel of light. We can recognize the moves of Satan only with the understanding of the Word of God and the guiding of the Holy Spirit.

MEMORY VERSE: Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. —Matthew 10:34

Jesus Is Our Example

Mark 3:1-6 Jesus, our example, went into the synagogue in Capernaum and was about to heal the man with a withered hand. Immediately the battle lines were set between good and evil. The faultfinders, the Pharisees, were already decided against Jesus. They wanted Him to heal the man so they could accuse Him of breaking the Sabbath.

Beaten at their own scheme, the Pharisees sought the Herodians and with them plotted ways to kill Jesus. Satan's forces, which cannot get along among themselves, will come together in false unity to fight against the truth. How easily we all—even saints—can fall into the sin of an accusing spirit. Let us watch our hearts, examining as to whether discovery of a fault in another gives us pain or pleasure. Watch and pray.

Jesus showed courage. He did not turn from His plan because of opposition. He did not fight His enemies with carnal weapons. We can learn from Him in our own meeting of opposition from the enemy's forces.

Holy Boldness

Acts 13:6-12 Paul looked the enemy right straight in the face and named Elymas out as a false prophet, a **child of the devil**, and an **enemy of all righteousness**. Satan yet today transforms his false prophets into angels of

so-called light (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). This severe rebuke was from the Holy Spirit speaking through Paul. As Elymas was smote with blindness for propagating a perverted doctrine, so people yet today grope in darkness and blindness when they resist the truth. The deputy was astonished at the clear doctrine of the Lord, and he believed. The straight, clear Gospel of Christ will still cast Satan out and cause honest hearts to believe and be won over to God.

When the serpent's head is bruised, be assured he will strike back; he will bruise our heel. When those in high places see a prosperous work being done, they will become envious. They will contradict and blaspheme the message. To agree or to disagree is each individual's privilege, but the good seed has been sown.

The Threefold Secret of Victory

Matthew 10:16-28 Jesus did not tell His followers of any generation that the Christian way would be easy. The fact that Christians are in warfare lets one know that life will be filled with conflict. Paul told Timothy to "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2:3).

Being sent out among wolves is not an easy way for sheep to go. The only thing they have to protect them is a good shepherd. Let us look into the threefold secret of victory: (1) Wisdom and guilelessness . . . **wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.** "The serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field" (Genesis 3:1), hence, the serpent's association with wisdom. Christians were also to be harmless. The Greek version says "guilelessness," a character in which there is no alloy. (2) Absolute confidence in the Director . . . **take no thought.** These words indicate Jesus' tender sympathy with the feelings of the unlearned disciples, while standing before those who were counted so superior to them in power and knowledge. Christ promised He would tell them what they should say and also how they should say it. (3) Steadfast and final perseverance. We must endure as long as the trial lasts; if necessary, to the end of our lives. God is greater than our enemies. One joined to Him need not fear them. As we share with Christ in suffering, we will share with Him in victory.

Fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Who is this? God does not destroy souls and bodies. Christ will turn some away, but He only makes final the separation the sinner has already made (Revelation 2:23). God has life not death (John 10:10). It is Satan who destroys souls and bodies. Therefore we must avoid with great fear any sin or denial of Christ or compromise with His enemies. The Lord has deliverance for the godly

(2 Peter 2:9). The saint's business is to boldly speak the Gospel message of God.

Our Greatest Enemies

One of the greatest battlefields we will face is in our own minds. Here we have the great battle with self, our greatest enemy. Self is constantly coming on the scene, exalting itself against the knowledge of God. We must bring every thought into captivity to be able to obey Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Matthew 10:36 Our own loved ones may betray us to the enemies of Christ, through fear or false teaching. This is happening many times. Choose Christ first. We must neither abandon Christ to please them or deny Christ for fear of them. If we do not love Christ above all, we are not worthy of Him and will be cast out. Matthew 10:39 brings a very pointed message: He that lives shall die and he that dies shall live. Every person is either dead to Christ and joined to self or dead to self and joined to Christ.

Souls cannot be won over to God without battling the forces that oppose Christ. We must "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

JUST A THOUGHT

**The only way to settle a disagreement is
on the basis of what is right—not who is right.**

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LESSON 9

GOOD SOLDIERS DON'T QUIT

Scripture Texts: 1 Corinthians 16:13; 2 Timothy 2:1-5; Hebrews 12:4; 1 Peter 1:13; Luke 18:8

We must be strong, manly, and faithful before great opposition and danger. How can we do this? Trying hard and determination are not enough. Paul, speaking of hard places in life, said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). God gave much of the answer to this question when He spoke through Isaiah in Isaiah 40:31.

Today we look further into God's instructions for fighting the Christian warfare and for preparing to meet the most violent attacks of Satan.

MEMORY VERSE: Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.
—1 Corinthians 16:13

Be Strong

1 Corinthians 16:13 Watch ye. Watch self to stay holy and the heart to stay true. Watch God to obey Him, others that we do our duty to them, and the enemies of our souls that they do not lead us from the old paths. **Stand fast in the faith**—"in one spirit," unity and love (Philippians 1:27); "in the Lord," living in Him (Philippians 4:1); in the faith, or belief in the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-4) and in all the Word of God. **Quit you like men.** It takes brave, strong, courageous, unflinching, faithful men and women to fight victoriously in this Christian warfare. The quitters are weak, fearful, doubting, tossed to and fro like children by every wind of doctrine, and never settled on the foundation that is sure. **Be strong**—strong not in ourselves but in the Lord. Do not yield to sin in any form.

The Strength Is in Jesus Christ

2 Timothy 2:1-3 Paul wrote to his young fellow laborer Timothy, **Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus**—in the life of God imparted to him. No one can be spiritually strong except by the gift of life from Christ. **The things that thou hast heard . . . commit thou to faithful men.** Pass on the Gospel to others that they may be faithful to it. It must be spread to all people. **Endure hardness.** Satan is determined to defeat us. It takes active

resistance to withstand him. It takes the power of God. We must be firm, determined to take any difficulty or suffering, and not yield. Jesus gives us a great promise in Matthew 24:13.

Warfare Calls for a Separation

2 Timothy 2:4-5 No man that warreth entangleth himself. No good soldier becomes entangled with his own interests. Every personal interest, business, or activity must be dropped to free him for fighting. Dear ones, cannot we see how necessary it is that we drop every selfish interest and worldly ambition and pursuit if we are to please **him who hath chosen** us? He said, "Whosoever . . . forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33).

We are to be separated *from* and *to*—from self and the world to Christ, that we may please Him. To do so we must **strive lawfully**—according to His rules. Only by obeying the Bible and the voice of the Holy Spirit can we gain "the crown of life" (James 1:12). When God asks us to forsake all that we have, to resist evil unto blood and with our lives, and to endure faithful unto the end, He is not asking too much. Compare what others ask and what they give in return. Communism demands that one surrender property, freedom, chosen pursuits, home, children, truth, hope, faith, God, and the Savior with no reward. Tyrants press their claims by force and cruelty. God uses love and gives all things in return—"joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8), in "the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Timothy 4:8).

What Is Asked of Us?

Hebrews 12:4 Hebrews, Chapter 11, lists many faithful saints of God who labored, suffered, and died for their faith, "not accepting deliverance" (verse 35) by compromise. We sometimes speak of them as the "Who's Who of Faith." They and Jesus Himself are held up as examples to inspire and encourage us to follow. There is no limit set for the suffering we must endure before dropping our resistance to sin. Jesus stopped at nothing, but gave His life. Though we may have suffered, most of us have **not yet resisted unto blood**—not suffered physical injury or death. God will go with us making the way before us, but we must resist sin with our all (1 Corinthians 10:13).

1 Peter 1:13 Wherefore—because of the greatness of the salvation we are discussing—**gird up the loins of your mind**. We might compare this girding up to rolling up our sleeves to begin work. The Christian girds up his

mind by drawing in all wandering, idle, foolish thoughts and concentrating upon the main purpose of serving Christ and conquering Satan, determined to win. **Be sober**—alert and serious in taking responsibility. Think seriously, take heed, and give careful attention to God's commands. Sobriety is not gloom. It is depth and seriousness. **Hope to the end**—constantly keep in view with hope—the **grace**—the gift of God—to be brought . . . **at the revelation of Jesus Christ**—when Jesus is seen at His Second Coming. What gift will He bring His redeemed ones then? For this glorious hope, we are to gird our minds.

Anchoring Our Position

There is a spirit prevalent today that fears sober thought. Talk about God, prayer, or anything, it says, but do not get serious. Shy away from old-fashioned duty, responsibility, sorrow for sin, or dependence on God. Have fun today, do not think of tomorrow, avoid intense feeling or deep concern. Do not go to extremes or be fanatic. This is not right.

Luke 18:8 As the coming of Christ draws near, Satan is intensifying his efforts to destroy faith in God. He has many methods. Unbelief and blasphemy grow more extreme. Many presuming to speak for God's church voice denials of Christ and the Bible under pretense of improved interpretation. How can we anchor our position and that of our children, so as not to be shaken loose by Satan's cruel forces? We must know what we believe and where we stand. Life is real, and life is earnest. We cannot live it in lightness and escape the judgments of God (Hebrews 2:1-3).

A. B. Simpson tells of a painting showing a beautiful French girl and her Protestant lover on the night before the terrible massacre of St. Bartholomew. With tears she tries to pin a Catholic badge on his breast as protection from the swords of the assassins. He gently holds back her hand and unpins the badge, knowing they probably will never meet again on earth. He was quitting himself like a man. And God saw.

JUST A THOUGHT

**Faith is no lone traveler, she will not go
except hand in hand with Obedience.**



LESSON 10

NEVER LOOK BACK

Scripture Texts: Luke 9:62, Hebrews 12:25-29; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 3:13-14; Mark 13:13

He who turns from following Christ loses his salvation. God is going to allow severe testings to shake off the weak and false, and keep the strong and true. God has provided means, through His grace, whereby we may stand. We must endure to the end to be finally saved.

Prayer is often requested for the unsaved. This is good, but we must also pray for the saints. (Read Ephesians 6:18; 2 Timothy 1:3.) Think back to many seemingly strong saints who made a strong start, but failed to finish the race. This is why we should pray for one another. As Satan's attacks increase, how much will our prayers for ourselves and for each other affect our enduring unto the end?

MEMORY VERSE: Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. —Philippians 3:13-14

Hand to the Plow

Luke 9:62 When a man starts to plow a field, he plans a straight line and sets a point on the farther side toward which to drive. To take his eyes from that point and look back would turn him from the straight course. He would miss the goal. Jesus, in the previous five verses, had been talking with three who wanted to follow Him if it did not require a complete break with their former lives. Jesus made it clear that no one can serve Him without a clean break with sin and complete dedication to Him. God has laid a straight line for us to plow spiritually—a holy life for us to live. He set a goal for us to work toward—eternal life with Him. One who starts the Christian life, then looks back, wishing again for the world's pleasures and comforts, is not a fit member of God's kingdom—he is not a child of God. The words are **looking back**, present tense. While he is looking, he is unfit. He can repent of his looking back (backsliding), if he has not gone too far, and again plow a straight furrow. But many, yes most, never do. It is dangerous to look back. "REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE" (Luke 17:32). (Read Genesis 19:1-26.)

A Final Shaking Off

Hebrews 12:25-29 Those **who refused**, or disobeyed, **him that spake on earth**—Moses, the mediator of the old covenant—were punished. Much greater punishment will be for those who **turn away from him that speaketh from heaven**—Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, the Gospel (John 1:17). Jesus spoke from Heaven because He came from Heaven (John 8:23). God's **voice . . . shook the earth** when He gave the Law on Mount Sinai. Now He promises to shake **once more** both **earth** and **heaven**. (Read Haggai 2:6-7.) Why? To remove all that can be shaken off and keep all that are so firmly anchored they **cannot be shaken** loose. **Things that are made**—made by man, purely human, of the earth, will be shaken off. The things of God will remain, people who are born of God and led by His Spirit.

How can we be ones who **remain**? God's kingdom **cannot be moved**. In it, He reigns in the hearts of His saved ones. He provides grace sufficient to withstand all shakings. **Let us have grace**—take it, use it. Without it we cannot **serve God acceptably**. "God receives no burnt offering not kindled by fire from His own altar" (Adam Clarke).

Since there is such great danger in looking or turning back, we cannot afford to let conditions and situations affect our position with God. God's grace is sufficient for us (2 Corinthians 12:9). We cannot afford to allow our position to depend upon our companions. Their strength is not sufficient for us. Their weakness can pull us down. We need one another's prayers, but God has so designed that we can make it if no one else prays for us. If we use the grace He gives us now, He will give more as needed. We stand by being filled with the Holy Spirit—"this grace wherein we stand" (Romans 5:2).

A Way to Escape

1 Corinthians 10:13 Satan pursues us to tempt and destroy. Looking back is a spiritual condition that begins in the mind. Actions depend on thoughts. Thoughts of evil will weaken one's hold on God, and he will fall when the shaking time comes. **God is faithful . . . with the temptation**, He makes **a way to escape**. He supplies grace equal to the need. To avoid sin and do what is right, look for the way to escape. It is always there. No one can say when he falls into sin, "I can't help it." When God sees faith and a desire for a way out, He opens the way—always.

Reward for Enduring

Philippians 3:13-14 Paul had not yet finished his course, completed his work, or obtained his crown. So he pressed on **toward the mark** or goal to which God called him. With strong exertion, he cut out all other interests. He did not even look to the left or to the right. **Forgetting . . . things . . . behind**—Paul did not neglect obligations or fail to make things right. He did not look back to the world in indecision, nor turn in desire to his old life of companions. When he repented, he left the old life and began a new one. As Paul kept his eyes on the mark, so must we. That mark is Jesus.

Mark 13:13 Ye shall be hated—the Church of God and the people of the world are on opposite sides. Different spirits motivate them; they serve different masters. Therefore the world hates the church as it hates Christ. **For my name's sake**—because we are His. **He that shall endure**—continue unto **the end** in the life of faith—**he shall be saved**. He shall receive the final phase of salvation: the resurrection of the body in an incorruptible state, entrance to Heaven, and a crown of life. No promise of this is ever given to anyone who puts his hand to the plow and then looks back and goes into sin. It is for those only whom death finds abiding in Christ.

Are we praying for those who persecute our brethren and ourselves as we are praying for our brethren who are being persecuted? Is not the reward worth the commitment?

JUST A THOUGHT

**No farmer ever plowed a field
by turning it over in his mind.**



LESSON 11

STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS ON THE EARTH

Scripture Texts: Hebrews 11:8-16; 1 Peter 2:9-11; 1 John 2:15-17

Our conversation is in Heaven. God's people are hid with Christ in God. Their lives are anchored in Heaven. Their citizenship is there (Philippians 3:20). This is what all Christians have in common that makes their fellowship possible. Saints of God are oddballs, misfits, square pegs in round holes, so to speak. This is because the world does not know them. Jesus calls saints *salt, light, and a city set on a hill*. God's people are citizens of Heaven and dependent upon God.

MEMORY VERSE: Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. —1 John 3:1

Abraham's Faith and Hope

Hebrews 11:8-16 By faith Abraham . . . obeyed the calling of God to go out, **not knowing** where. Abraham had no knowledge of what was ahead. All he had was God's command and promise (Genesis 12:1-3). It was either to obey God in faith or to disobey. He trusted God. **He sojourned**—dwelt temporarily—in Canaan—**as in a strange country**. It was not home to Abraham. He lived in **tabernacles**—temporary dwellings—to the end of his life. Why? Because he believed that God's promise reached farther than the land of Canaan. **He looked for a city . . . whose builder and maker is God**—the Kingdom of God both on earth and in Heaven. His spiritual vision let him see that Canaan, while it was literally given to Abraham's family, was also a type of a greater, spiritual possession. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob held their faith through their journey here. By faith they saw, were **persuaded** of, and **embraced** the promises. By claiming to be **strangers and pilgrims** here, they showed their desire for the **heavenly** country. They never got to see or inherit that country, but we have found it, and are a part of it, thank God. That **city which hath foundations** is based on sure, true, good, and eternal footing (Ephesians 2:19-20).

The Church of God is the city that Abraham saw by faith. Its builder is God. Jesus said, "I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). It is a heavenly country that is existing on earth for a time (Ephesians 3:15).

The Church on Earth

Among the questions that enter our thoughts is why opposition, trials, and persecution are the lot of the Church of God. To answer this question, we must remember that this is a corrupted world. It is no longer good as God created it. This places the church in the middle of "the whole world [that] lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19).

1 Peter 2:9-11 The Church of God on the earth is traveling to Heaven. God's people are a **chosen generation**. His people are of one generation and are holy (Ephesians 1:4). They are a **royal priesthood**. Jesus Christ "hath made us kings and priests unto God" (Revelation 1:6). As *kings*, saints reign over sin. As *priests*, they draw near to God and intercede in behalf of those in sin. The offering that the saints, or priests, bring to God is the "living sacrifice" of themselves (Romans 12:1) and "the sacrifice of praise" (Hebrews 13:15). **An holy nation**—separated unto God, cleansed from sin, righteous. **A peculiar people**—God's own private property, belonging to Him alone, responsible to Him only.

These terms describe the Church of God in the Gospel dispensation. Compare with the description of Israel, God's special people in the Law dispensation (Exodus 19:5-6; Deuteronomy 7:6).

The purpose of people being transformed into this kind of people is to show forth the praises of God by word and by life. In time past, they were not a people—the Gentile nations were not accepted under the law but now the Gospel is for all people. The people of God are different and separate from the people of the world. They have come out of darkness into his marvelous light. We must abstain from fleshly lusts. We cannot be at home in both the world and in Heaven. The interest and attention of a true saint of God are set upon Heavenly objects, not upon selfish pleasures or worldly possessions. He uses earthly things only as temporary tools to serve Jesus on his journey through this country to Heaven.

The Saints' Program

1 John 2:15-17 **Love not the world** because it and its **lust** pass away and leave us empty, without value or hope. **He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever**—has eternal life. He builds on eternal things. No one can love the world and love the Father also. There are two ways open: to love the world or to do the will of God. Which will we choose? Build for eternity, not for this world.

We cannot have a vision of the kingdom simply by desiring it. We cannot

be a stranger and pilgrim on the earth just by calling himself one. We are not a foreigner to the world unless we are citizens "of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19). We become a citizen of Heaven by taking Christ who is the way to the Father (John 14:6). Only the Spirit of God can take love of the world out of our hearts and fill us with love for God and Heaven. Abraham was a stranger and pilgrim on the earth. He saw by faith the establishment of God's kingdom on earth and in Heaven. Why can't we?

JUST A THOUGHT

**It is better to look ahead and prepare
than to look back and regret.**



LESSON 12

FINAL VICTORY GAINED

Scripture Texts: Hebrews 3:12-14; 10:26-38; 2 Timothy 4:6-8

The saddest plight in the world is that of a person who has had the blessings we have been studying, but has lost them before gaining that final victory. This is not necessary. Only by holding confidence in God to the end can we go to Heaven. If a saved person draws back from God, he is lost. We can hold confidence by faithfully enduring trials, and God will turn them to good for us. We can hold confidence by standing on God's Word, praying in the Spirit, and keeping in the love of God. God has never lost a soul committed to Him.

MEMORY VERSE: For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end. —Hebrews 3:14

Danger of Falling

Hebrews 3:12-14 Take heed, brethren—give most earnest attention. The devil is always watching for a break in a saint's armor. A little neglect of prayer, a little giving in to some temptation, and he will insert some unbelief to break one's trust in God.

Exhort one another—we owe duties to each other. We are members one of another (1 Corinthians 12:25-26). A word of encouragement or prayer may be just what a brother or sister needs to hold true. Contrary to modern religious teachings, man can fall from the grace of God. The Scriptures in our lesson today prove this teaching to be false doctrine. One can fall away. To fall away after being saved is worse than having never been saved (2 Peter 2:20-21). **While it is called To day**—before it is too late, before Satan deceives and blinds him to the danger until he has him trapped and bound. He will harden the tender heart until repentance is difficult or impossible.

As long as we are **partakers of Christ** and as long as we **hold the beginning of our confidence**, this trust will remain **steadfast unto the end**. Remember how you trusted Him in the first days of your Christian life? This trust must remain. God puts it in, but we must keep it there. To stop trusting and serving Christ at any time is to drop out of the battle.

Confidence, the Secret of Enduring

Hebrews 10:26-38 **If we sin willfully**—if we will to sin, choose to sin, to do what we know is wrong **after that we have received the knowledge of the truth**—after being saved and Spirit-filled, known the truth by experiencing it, to then choose sin is to reject Christ, the only **sacrifice for sins**. There is no other. All that remains for us is fear of the Judgment and eternal punishment. But we need not follow this road. There is no other promise for those who stop trusting Jesus.

The Hebrews had, by their fellowship with Paul, shared in his persecutions. **Joyfully**, because in their hearts was assurance that **in heaven** they had **a better and an enduring substance**. Mark 10:30; Matthew 5:12—Here the promise, there the fulfillment. Here the temporary, there the enduring. Here the shadow, there the substance. **Cast not away . . . confidence**. No one can TAKE from us the favor of God or our place in Heaven. Jesus said, "No man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:29). But we ourselves can THROW it away, or give it over to the devil. If kept, **confidence** will bring us a **great recompense of reward**.

We need patience to serve without weariness, persevere without complaint, and hope without losing faith, to meet sin, frustration, opposition, difficulty, failure, disaster, and delay. But Christ **will come**. It may seem like a long time, but He says, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me" (Revelation 22:12). With patience hold on to confidence.

The just shall live by faith. The justified life is sustained by faith. One who draws back falls into a lost state (perdition) again. Yes, a saved person can be lost, but he need not be if he keeps faith fixed in God.

God's Keeping Power Is Sure

2 Timothy 4:6-8 Paul, chained in a Roman prison, knew that he was to be killed. The time grew near for him to be beheaded. He was not discouraged or fearful because he looked back on a life of trust in God. He had present, close communion with God.

I have fought a good fight—against sin—**finished my course**. God had given him a work (Acts 9:15-16). He had finished it and obtained a passing grade. **Kept the faith**—kept faithful, kept his consecration true, held the beginning of his confidence **steadfast unto the end (Hebrews 3:14)**. His treasures were laid up in Heaven. Now he was going to them and to his Savior.

Henceforth—from now on, the Lord would give him **a crown of righteousness**, the reward of a righteous, Christ-filled life. All who know Christ

look forward with joy to His coming. We each can be one of them. The same crown is for us. This is final salvation, future bliss in Heaven. We must not miss it. If we "endure unto the end" (Matthew 24:13), it will be ours.

No Light Matter

We treat backsliding too lightly. We must endure—continue throughout life—to reach Heaven. We underestimate salvation if we think it to be chosen or rejected as the clothing we wear. We underestimate Satan if we think we are free to stray and return to God at will. Many have found to their great sorrow that straying may be easy, but that Satan has binding chains. He catches unawares, and the power of God is the only release. Oh friend, heed Jesus' warning: "I say unto all, Watch" (Mark 13:37). We are saved by trusting Christ. We are kept in the same way. All dependence is on Him, not on ourselves.

JUST A THOUGHT

**When it comes time to die,
make sure that all you have to do is die.**

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LESSON 13

THE JUDGMENT

Scripture Texts: Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Romans 2:16; John 12:48; Matthew 16:27; Romans 2:7-11; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10; Romans 8:19-23

As people work fervently here in this life to earn an earthly living, payday is looked forward to with great expectation. It is the reward for our labors. The same applies to the Christian who labors and fights for the cause of Christ through his days appointed here in this life. Death is his reward, his final crown of victory over Satan and the power of evil.

This is the day of all days, the day he leaves all the battles behind with their troubles and sorrows, and goes to be with Jesus in Heaven for all eternity—PAYDAY.

MEMORY VERSE: For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. —Romans 6:23

Importance of Our Response

We have been studying how God, through Jesus Christ, has given provision for each soul to live righteously. How each of us use these basic provisions determines our success or failure in this life. Our response to what God has provided determines what our payday will bring—life everlasting in Heaven or death in hell. We must look to the Heavenly goal as the only thing of worth.

The Day of Judgment

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 The Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, clearly teaches there is to be a Judgment Day, a day when all men and women shall receive their just dues (Acts 10:42; Revelation 20:12-13). We shall all be judged according to the Gospel of Christ. The Judge is appointed by God, and His jurisdiction includes the whole earth (Acts 17:31). Both living and dead are included in the Judgment. Christ is that Judge (Romans 14:10).

Romans 2:16 A standard is fixed by which we shall be judged—the standard under which each lived. No one having lived under the dispensation of grace and truth will be judged by the Law, only those living under the Law will be judged by the Law.

The Judgment does not determine whether or not the individual is guilty. This fact will be fully settled at death. The man or woman dying in sin will remain guilty forever. The fact that all receive a reward at death proves this. The Judgment will lack investigation because to God all things are fully known. "Every knee shall bow . . . and every tongue shall confess" (Romans 14:11) without forced acknowledgment.

John 12:48 The revealed will of God is the standard of judgment. Christ told His hearers they would be judged by His words. Judgment will depend on the degree of knowledge of the individual, not only on what he knows, but on what he had an opportunity to know and neglected to learn. Some have a more complete understanding of God's will than others, so are more responsible. The standards by which men are to be judged are the same as the standards by which sin is now imputed. The Judgment will be perfectly just. There will be no spite, but only justice.

The Day of Reward

Matthew 16:27 The same reasons that call for a Judgment require that the Judgment be accompanied with suitable rewards. The Bible teaches future and final rewards for all.

Romans 2:7-11 The rewards are not received on this earth. The earth is a place of probation, a preparation place for the eternal state. Change and decay are evident everywhere. This earth is not a suitable place for eternal existence. The earth will be destroyed at the Day of Judgment, so it cannot be the eternal home of either the righteous or the wicked.

2 Thessalonians 1:6-7 Heaven is a prepared place where Christ sits at the Father's right hand awaiting the reception of the saints. He will come for us and take us to that place where He now is. Heaven will not be this earth made over. Heaven is a real place to which Christ ascended and from which He will return.

2 Thessalonians 1:8-10 The wicked will be punished in hell. As Heaven is a prepared place, so is hell. Hell is not the grave. The grave is not a place of punishment, but a place to which all go regardless of character. It is only the body that enters the grave. Hell is a place and not a mere condition (Psalm 9:17), and man, "both soul and body"(Matthew 10:28), may be sent there. The wicked shall be in a state of conscious suffering in hell. This is described as "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:12), and a place of unquenchable fire. The rich man in hell had all his senses.

The Nature of Rewards

Romans 8:19-23 Paul here, considering only saved people, pictured God's children as **delivered from the bondage of corruption**—freed from sorrow, pain, and death. No temptation or danger of falling will be there.

Whole creation—all people, even those which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan. **Waiting for the adoption . . . for the redemption of our body**—to have our flesh redeemed from sickness and death, given life with Christ forever. "Our vile body" will "be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Philippians 3:21). "An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4). "And they shall reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 22:5).

Our bodies will be in Heaven, just like Jesus' risen body. He had flesh and bones; He could handle things; He ate; He talked; He could hear. He had all five senses. Oh, how wonderful meeting the saints of all ages! DO NOT MISS IT.

JUST A THOUGHT

**Every person is a soldier of Jesus Christ
or an agent for the devil.**

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NOTES

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