

# *WHAT IS YOUR NAME*

**STUDIES 1 - 10**

*STUDENT MANUAL*

**Stephen Nemeth Lectures**

# *What Is Your Name*

Studies 1 - 10

## *Student Manual*

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# **CHRISTIANS**

## **STUDY 1**

**Scripture Portions: Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16**

The word Christian occurs only in these three verses in the New Testament. By studying the way in which it was originally used, we will discover three of the characteristics of a real Christian.

It is very necessary for us to begin here for many people have a wrong idea as to what constitutes a Christian in the New Testament sense of the word. Indeed, multitudes of people who profess to be Christians are not real Christians at all.

They may have been born and brought up in a Christian home. They may have attended a Christian school. They may have affiliated themselves to a Christian church. But, that is not enough.

It is not sufficient to be a normal or merely outward Christian, because, to be a Christian is an inward matter. It is not simply a matter of profession but of possession.

It is a great thing to adopt Christian principles and to try to live by them, to follow Christ, to endeavor to be like Him, to pray regularly and to go to church, but doing these things does not make anyone a Christian.

I did all these things when I was a youngster. I was born into a Christian home. I regularly went to church and I really tried to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. The time came, however, when I suddenly discovered that being a Christian is not merely an external matter.

I had been a Christian in name but I did not have Christ in my life. When I received Him into my life and committed myself to Him, I became a Christian in nature.

The Rev. W. P. Nicholson, the Irish evangelist through whom I became a Christian, used to say some startling things. On one occasion he affirmed that a man can be christened, dedicated, confirmed, baptized and even vaccinated and still not become a Christian!

He was trying to emphasize the point to be a Christian outwardly is not enough. To submit to rites and ceremonies is not enough. To pray, read the Bible and to go to church is not enough.

So far as I was concerned, he made his point very effectively, for I came to see that, though I wore a Christian label, I did not possess the Christian life.

So, it is very important for us to ask and answer the question “What is a Christian? What are the characteristics or marks of a real Christian?”

When we turn to the Bible, we find the answer. It is significant that in the New Testament, Christians are called “saints” about six times, “disciples” about thirty, “believers” about eighty and “brethren” about two hundred times.

Only three times are they called Christians. Why is this significant?

If we confine ourselves to these instances where the word occurs, we see three of the distinguishing marks of a real Christian.

What is a Christian and how does he differ from the one who is not a Christian?

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### A CHRISTIAN IS ONE WHO BELONGS TO CHRIST.

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#### **Acts 11:26 -**

Who called them Christians? Did the people of Antioch call them Christians as a kind of nickname? Was it God who called them Christians? We do not know for sure, but what does it signify? Why does God call these early disciples Christians?

Surely it was because of their evident attachment to the Lord Jesus Christ.

One look at these disciples was enough for anyone to know that, in some special and wonderful way, they had a personal and vital attachment to the Lord. They obviously loved Him and had given themselves to Him. They served Him gladly and were even willing to suffer for Him. In a word, they belonged to Him.

An Englishman is a man who belongs to England, a Russian belongs to Russia and an African belongs to Africa.

What then is a Christian? He is a Christ-man, a man who belongs to Christ.

How does a man become an Englishman, a Russian or an African? By birth in the country of England, Russia or Africa.

How then does a man become a Christian? The answer is the same - by birth.

A Christian is one who is born of God. He has not only had a natural, physical birthday, but he has also had a spiritual birthday.

He has been “born again” -

#### **John 3:3 -**

born a second time -

**John 3:4 -**

born of the Spirit -

**John 3:6 -**

and been “a partaker of the divine nature” -

**2 Peter 1:4 -**

He has thus received a new life, the very life of God.

Peter had something to say about this second, this spiritual birth, by which we become Christians. He says that Christians have been “born again” not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which liveth and abideth forever.

He then goes on to say -

**1 Peter 1:23 -**

**1 Peter 1:25 -**

In other words, a man becomes a Christian when he hears and believes the message of the gospel, turns from his sin and reliance upon his works and puts his whole trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. From that moment, he is a real Christian. He belongs to Christ.

This is illustrated for us in -

**Acts 11:19-21 -**

When these servants of God came to Antioch, they preached the gospel. They declared the glorious truth that God had sent His Son into the world to be the Saviour of all who would put their trust in Him -

**John 3:16 -**

that Jesus had come, had lived and died to deal with the whole problem of man’s sin -

**1 Timothy 1:15 -**

that, having died to provide salvation, God had raised Him from the dead -

**Acts 2:32 -**

and had afterwards exalted Him to His right hand -

**Acts 2:33 -**

**Acts 2:36 -**

where He is now able and willing to be the Saviour of all who will come to God by Him-

**Hebrews 7:25 -**

This is the message which was preached at Antioch, the result of which was that -

**Acts 11:21 -**

In other words, they were brought into a personal living relationship with the Lord. They now belonged to Him.

If a Christian is one who belongs to Christ, are you a Christian? Do you belong to God? Have you turned to Him and put your whole trust in Him so that you can gladly say, "I am His and He is mine?"

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## **2. A CHRISTIAN IS ONE WHO WITNESSES FOR CHRIST.**

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**Acts 26:28 -**

The apostle Paul was making his defense before king Agrippa and Festus, the governor. He witnessed to them by testifying to the power of the Lord Jesus Christ Who had so wonderfully saved and satisfied him ever since he met Him on the Damascus road many years before.

Seeing how intently the king was listening to him, Paul became very bold and made a powerful plea to him to become a Christian, too. It was a difficult and brave thing for him to do.

Festus reacted by getting very angry and pronouncing Paul to be mad, but from the king it brought forth these amazing words "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

Read **Acts 26:24-29.**

One mark of a true Christian is that whatever his circumstances may be, he is ready and glad to witness for the Lord.

Paul is a great example to us for day or night, he was always on the job speaking of and for his Lord, seeking to turn others to Him, whether he was in the city, whether he was traveling, whether he was in prison or in the king's palace, in the marketplace or on the high seas, he was witnessing for Christ.

In **Acts, chapter nine**, we read the details of his conversion. We find that immediately he came to know the Lord -

**Acts 9:20** -

Straightway, immediately, without delay, he preached Christ. He went on doing this in the power of the Holy Spirit until the day of his death.

As we read the book of Acts, we learn that Paul was not the only one who was doing this but that the early Christians were all characterized by this burning zeal to make Christ known. The first followers of Christ were bold witnesses for their Lord.

Jesus said -

**Acts 1:8** -

And witnesses they were!

One small, but telling, illustration of this truth is found in -

**Acts 8:1** -

**Acts 8:4** -

Notice that it was the rank and file members of the church, and not the apostles, who were scattered abroad and went everywhere preaching the gospel. They were all witnessing Christians. They knew they belonged to Christ and they simply had to make Him known to others!

If a Christian is one who belongs to Christ and who witnesses for Christ, are you a Christian? Have you put your whole trust in the Lord? Are you unashamedly living for Him and letting others know that you belong to Him, so that they also may come to know Him?

A Christian belongs to Christ. A Christian witnesses for Christ. But, there is something else which inevitably follows.

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3. A CHRISTIAN IS ONE WHO SUFFERS WITH CHRIST.

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Read **1 Peter 4:12-16**.

In effect, Peter is saying, “Now you are a Christian, you must expect to suffer simply because you are a Christian.”

You see, a real Christian is one who is identified with Christ. He must, therefore, suffer His reproach. See what the following verses in the scriptures have to say about this.

**Matthew 10:22** -

**John 15:18-20** -

**John 16:33** -

**Philippians 1:29** -

We can sum up the teaching of these verses by reading what the Lord said to Saul (Paul) at the time when he was persecuting the Christians. He asked him -

**Acts 9:4** -

From this we see that, when Saul was persecuting the Christians, he was, in fact, persecuting Christ. This is what is meant by bearing the reproach of Christ -

**Hebrews 13:13** -

and sharing in -

**Philippians 3:10** -

for -

**Matthew 10:24** -

The suffering for Christ is a mark of a real Christian.

The early Christians faced terrible opposition. They were threatened, maligned, despised and persecuted simply because of their love for and loyalty to Christ.

But, they went on living radiantly for Him and speaking boldly of what He had done for them and of what He could and would do for others.



Indeed, they did it so joyfully that we read in -

**Acts 5:40-42 -**

Why is it that a real Christian must suffer?

It is because he is markedly different from a non-Christian.

The early Christians suffered because they were completely different from the pagans amongst whom they lived. They had become transformed men and women. They had to be one thing or the other, for Christ or against Him.

Today, unfortunately, many of us who are Christians are not prepared to be different and those amongst whom we live and work hardly recognize that there is any difference between us and those who do not profess to be Christians.

What a challenge is this!

In the first century there were two kinds of people - pagans and Christians. Today the standard has been lowered. You and I must raise it again. We must recognize the fact that, when anyone really dedicates his all to Christ, he must live a separated life and must adopt the Lord's standards for daily living.

This will inevitably bring misunderstanding or even suffering or even ostracism. But, how wonderfully worthwhile it will be, so long as we are faithful to the Lord and are used by Him for the salvation of others!

This surely is what God wants.

These, then, are three of the characteristics of a real Christian -

1. One who belongs to Christ.
2. One who witnesses for Christ.
3. One who suffers for Christ and who suffers with Christ.

Are you a Christian?

What kind of a Christian are you?

***NOTES***

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# ***SAINTS***

## **STUDY 2**

**Ephesians 1:18; Ephesians 2:20, 22**

I believe it would be true to say that, if I were to go to twenty Christians, men and women who have been truly born again and who have been trusting the Lord Jesus alone for salvation, and if I were to ask them “Are you a saint?” most of them would say “No. I am not much of a saint!”

In one sense, their answer would be correct, but in another sense, their answer would be quite wrong.

Few Christians feel worthy of the name “saint” for they feel very unsaintly. They know that they are very far from what they would like to be or what God would have them to be.

The word “saint” really means “a holy one.” It is for this reason that we are very hesitant about admitting that we are saints.

Nevertheless, from God’s standpoint and in His estimate, every Christian is a saint.

Christians are saints because of their standing in Jesus Christ and by virtue of their union with Him. They are saints because -

they are “in Christ” -

**Ephesians 1:1 -**

they are accepted “in the Beloved” -

**Ephesians 1:6 -**

and because they have been “translated.....” -

**Colossians 1:13 -**

All God’s people are saints. If you are a Christian then this is how God describes you. You cannot be a Christian and yet not a saint.

When I looked up this word “saint” in my Bible, I discovered that there are only two classes of people - “saints” and “sinners.”

When a sinner turns to the Lord in repentance and trusts Jesus Christ as his Saviour, at once he becomes a saint.

In my study of this subject, I discovered that the words “saint” and “saints” occur over one hundred times in the Bible.

Let us look at some of them.

**1 Samuel 2:9 -**

**Psalm 37:28 -**

**Psalm 116:15 -**

**Romans 8:27 -**

**1 Corinthians 6:2 -**

**2 Thessalonians 1:10 -**

In many of his New Testament epistles, the apostle Paul addressed his letters to the saints. For example -

to the church at Rome he wrote -

**Romans 1:7 -** *To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

to the church at Corinth he wrote -

**1 Corinthians 1:2 -**

**2 Corinthians 1:1 -**

to the church at Ephesus -

**Ephesians 1:1 -**

to the church at Philippi -

**Philippians 1:1 -**

and to the church at Colosse -

**Colossians 1:1-2 -**

So Christians, believers, are saints, all of them are saints. God made them saints the moment they opened their hearts and received Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

A saint is one into whose life Christ Himself has come to dwell.

**2 Corinthians 13:5 -**

Jesus Christ is in you.

**Galatians 2:20 -**

**Colossians 1:27 -**

We must realize, however, that there is a great difference between God's way and man's way of making a saint. Man chooses someone who has lived an outstandingly good life in the estimate of the world, and many years or even centuries after the death of that one, he or she is canonized, made a saint.

There is absolutely no scriptural authority or warrant for this.

On the other hand, God takes a sinner who has abandoned his own righteousness, and the moment that sinner puts his trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation, God makes him a saint.

In one of his books, the late Dr. Harry Ironside relates the following incident.

One day two nuns called at his home to collect money for a certain charity. He invited them indoors. As he talked with them, he skillfully steered the conversation round to the subject of saints. Then he suddenly said to them, "Would you like to meet a saint?"

"Yes!" they answered.

"Well," said Dr. Ironside, "Look at me. I am a saint. I am St. Harry!"

The two nuns were very shocked, but this gave the doctor the opportunity of explaining to them how God makes saints and what a saint really is.

What are the characteristics of a saint?

In his Ephesian letter, Paul mentions three marks of a saint. So let us look closely at these three references and see what they have to teach us.

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1. SAINTS ARE GOD'S PROPERTY.

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**Ephesians 1:18 -**

It could also be rendered - *".....that we may know that we are God's investment."*

In one sense, this is true of all people. God is our Creator in that He made us, we belong to Him. He says -

**Ezekiel 18:4 -**

Paul tells us that we are the "offspring of God" and in Him we live and move and have our being.

**Acts 17:28-29 -**

Everyone belongs to God in a creatorial sense, but, in a redemptive sense, many are 'lost' to Him because they do not believe in Him nor do they love and trust Him.

Have you ever been to a lost property office and seen the array of articles which have been taken there? There are umbrellas, suitcases, handbags, portable typewriters, mackintoshes..... Do not they belong to anyone?

Of course they do, but the owners have lost them. They do not possess them.

**Ephesians 1:18 -** *The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,*

Here Paul is speaking of God's children, God's saints, Christians. He is saying that all God's saints are God's property. They were lost but He has found them and they belong to Him, so He actually possesses them.

Now, a Christian, a saint, belongs to the Lord in a twofold sense.

He is His by creation -

**Genesis 1:26 -**

He is also His by redemption, as Paul tell us in -

**1 Corinthians 6:19-20 -**

We who are Christians have been purchased by the precious blood of Jesus. We are thus God's property.

Peter amplifies this thought when he writes -

**1 Peter 1:18-19 -**

What a wonderful thing it is to be a saint!

Not only is it true that we have an “inheritance” in the Lord, not only do we possess so very much in Him, but, wonder of all wonders, He tells us that He possesses very much in us, that we belong to Him. We are “His inheritance!” We are God’s property! We are His possession!

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**2. SAINTS ARE GOD’S WORKMANSHIP.**

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**Ephesians 2:10 -**

These words could also be rendered - “*We are God’s handiwork, and this is surely very suggestive.*”

God is working in the lives of His people. He is causing all things to -

**Romans 8:28 -**

in order that we may ultimately be conformed to the image of His Son -

**Romans 8:29 -**

He has His hand upon our lives. He is working out His gracious plan and purpose in them. We are God’s handiwork. He is using all the circumstances, the joys and the sorrows, the pleasing and the painful things, in order that His pattern may be wrought out in the lives of His servants.

In the Old Testament, we find four pictures which illustrate this truth.

A metal worker.

**Exodus 39:3 -**

This is recorded in connection with the making of the priestly garments, but it describes exactly what the Lord is doing with us.

He is taking hold of our lives and is making them into something useful and worthwhile.

Sometimes the process is very painful and unpleasant, but we are God’s handiwork and He wants to make our lives useful, attractive and glorifying to Him.

A corn grinder.

**Leviticus 2:14 -**

In order to obtain flour, the corn has to be ground. Grinding is a painful process, but it is always done with a view to producing a useful end result.

If you are experiencing God's grinding process just now and you cannot understand it, remember that God knows what He is doing.

**John 13:7 -**

The finished product will prove that the painful process was well worthwhile.

An embroiderer.

**Psalms 45:14 -**

This is a picture of the bride being presented to the bridegroom.

God is seeking to put a pattern upon our lives. When He first makes us saints, the material of our lives is very plain, but, as we yield to Him, He puts His pattern upon us, stitch by stitch, and thus begins to form the design which will one day be completed.

**Philippians 1:6 -**

*d. A potter.*

**Jeremiah 18:1-4 -**

We see here the potter at the wheel with the shapeless clay in his hands. His great objective is to make an article which is both useful and beautiful, so he puts pressure upon it. All the time he is molding the clay, he continues to apply the pressure until it becomes a thing of very great beauty.

We are the clay and the Lord is the Potter. He asks His saints to yield to Him so that He may put His pressure upon them and shape them until the finished result is beautiful and useful for His eternal praise and honor.

Thus we see that the saints are God's workmanship. He is at work in their lives as a metal worker, a corn grinder, an embroiderer and a potter.



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### 3. SAINTS ARE GOD'S HABITATION.

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#### **Ephesians 2:22 -**

This could be rendered - *“Every saint is one in whom God has come to dwell.”*

Jesus said -

#### **John 14:23 -**

Isn't that tremendous? Because I am a saint, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit dwell within me!

Christians, saints, are God's dwelling place, His habitation.

What are the implications or practical results of all this!

1. If I am God's property, I must take great care of His property.

If my life, my body, all that constitutes 'me' belongs to the Lord, then I must take care that I do not willfully or carelessly damage it.

I must not neglect or hurt His property in any way, for I am only the tenant, whereas He is the Owner.

The apostle Paul wrote -

#### **1 Corinthians 6:19-20 -**

In other words, he says that, because you are His, you have a great responsibility. You cannot do just what you like with your life. There are usually certain restrictions in regard to property. For example, why you buy a house there are certain things you may not be able to do with it.

This is also true with God's saints.

There are restrictions of love which He imposes upon all those who belong to Him. It should be our chief delight to do those things which please Him.

Jesus said -

#### **John 14:15 -**

2. If I am God's handiwork, I must not hinder His work in me.

He may be working in my life as the Metal Worker. This will involve a good deal of unpleasant hammering.

He may be working in me as the Corn Grinder. This will bring pain and I say with the psalmist -

**Psalm 32:4 -**

Perhaps His particular work just now may be more like that of the Embroiderer. This is a gentle, quiet work, but the pricking of the needle may be irksome and irritating.

Or it may be that I am now experiencing the pressure of His hands as He works upon me on the Potter's wheel.

It is not very pleasant to be beaten out, to be ground, to feel the pinpricks of the needle or to be molded, but it is always worthwhile when the Lord Himself is the Worker.

Are we completely yielded to Him so that He may work out His perfect design in us and upon us?

- c. If I am God's temple, I must keep it clean and give Him full access to every part of it.*

God's temple is holy. It must not be defiled.

**2 Corinthians 6:16-17 -**

Is anything defiling your temple? Do you have a clean heart for worshiping God?

**Psalm 51:10 -**

Do you have clean feet for walking for God?

**Isaiah 52:11 -**

Do you have clean hands for working for God?

**Psalm 24:3-4 -**

Do you have clean lips for witnessing for God?

**Isaiah 6:7 -**

All God's people are saints. They are 'in Christ' and because of this, as to their standing before God, they are perfect, though as to their state, they are not yet perfect.

This is what Bishop Westcott meant when he wrote,

*"The mark of a saint is not perfection, but consecration. A saint is not a man without a fault, but a man who is given to God without reserve."*

Does this describe you?

***NOTES***

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# **SONS**

## **STUDY 3**

**Scripture Portion: 1 John 3:1-3**

### **1 John 3:1-3 -**

One thing which has helped me very much in the study of the epistles of the New Testament is the discovery that each writer emphasizes special aspects of truth. For example, John wrote for the family, whereas Peter, James and Jude wrote about the kingdom and Paul wrote about the church.

This is true only in a general sense, but, if we will bear this in mind, it will certainly help us to unlock the truth in these inspired epistles.

### **2 Timothy 2:15 -**

In these epistles John was writing to, for and about the family of God. When he wrote about God's children, he did not for one moment subscribe to the false notion of 'the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man.'

In the sense that God is the Creator of all men, then He is the Father of all men. But, in the section of scripture before us, John is referring to those people who are God's children in a spiritual and redemptive sense. This is made perfectly clear in -

### **1 John 3:1 -**

Obviously John had in mind a unique and distinctive people. He was not referring to all men. He was referring to 'the sons of God,' to Christians, to those who had received Christ as their Saviour and had been 'born of God.'

### **John 1:12-13 -**

We become the children of God by a miracle, the miracle of a new, a second birth, a birth from above. ('Born again' literally means 'from above.')

### **John 3:3 -**

I became a member of the Nemeth family by a physical birth, but, several years later I became a member of the family of God. How? By birth - a spiritual birth. I was born into the family of God by a supernatural act of the Holy Spirit.

It would seem that John went out of his way to impress upon his readers the importance of the new birth, for notice how frequently, in his first epistle, he refers to these privileged people as those who have been 'born of God.'

### **1 John 2:29b -**

**1 John 3:9a -**

**1 John 4:7b -**

**1 John 5:1a -**

**1 John 5:4a -**

**1 John 5:18b -**

Now notice that in these verses which we are studying, John tells us of four of the characteristics of God's children.

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**1. THEIR DIGNITY IS GREAT.**

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**1 John 3:1 -**

Do you catch the wonder in John's words?

He is filled with amazement and awe that those who come to Christ and trust Him as their Saviour are immediately placed into the family of God.

Christian, do you ever stop to think about the wonderful position of dignity, privilege and honor into which the Lord has brought you who are His child?

Think of it!

You were a child of wrath -

**Ephesians 2:3 -**

a child of disobedience -

**Ephesians 5:6 -**

You did not love the Lord. You had no time or place for Him in your life, but, when you turned to Him, God, in His love and grace, lifted you up and made you a member of the royal family of heaven.

**Ephesians 3:15 -**

This is not something which will be true of you only in eternity but it is true right here and now, for -

**1 John 3:2a -**

What a great dignity and honor God has bestowed upon you by virtue of your union with His Son! You are God's child, so you can hold your head high and say to yourself,

“Wonder of all wonders, I am a child of God!”

In these days of warfare in so many countries of the world, thousands of little children have been left destitute. Our hearts have been warmed as we have read of men and women with loving hearts, who have taken some of these little ones into their homes, to bring them up as members of their family where they will enjoy all the privileges of the other members of the family.

This is a wonderful thing to do. But, God has done infinitely more than this!

While we were destitute of everything but our sin, He came down to us in the Person of His only Son. He lifted us up and placed us into His own royal family and household that we might enjoy all the privileges of royalty.

So, the next time you are tempted to get depressed and sorry for yourself, stop and rejoice in this wonderful fact that you are God's child. Let the full glory of your high calling take possession of you.

This will enable you not only to be 'lost in wonder, love and praise' but also to cast off your fears and doubts and to rejoice that your dignity is great.

After his conversion, Billy Bray, the Cornish miner, used to rejoice in the wonderful fact that God had taken him from the dunghill and had set him among kings. We who are the children of God should likewise feel a very deep sense of gratitude that God has done the same wonderful thing for us.

Our dignity is great. But, John tells us more about the children of God.

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**2. THEIR DISTINCTIVENESS IS MARKED.**

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There is something about God's children that marks them out as a distinctive, a different people.

John is writing out of his experience as a Christian. He says that -

**1 John 3:1b -**

When Jesus came from heaven, the world did not recognize Him as the promised One, the Messiah, the Saviour of the world.

**John 1:11 -**

He was despised, rejected and eventually suffered the shame and pain of crucifixion.

Because the children of God are a distinctive, a different people, the world will not recognize us. They will misunderstand us. They may criticize and ostracize us.

The unregenerate man often regards Christians as very strange and foolish to be so 'religious.' He is mystified when we are unable to share some things of the world.

**1 John 2:15-17 -**

It is incomprehensible to him that, because it might stumble our brother, we are willing to deny ourselves certain things.

**Romans 14:21 -**

It seems ridiculous to him that we who are God's children, have a conscience that will not allow us to be untruthful -

**Acts 24:16 -**

that we seek to be honest before all men -

**Romans 12:17 -**

The unconverted person simply cannot understand why a Christian should be willing at the call of God, to give up a well-paid job to serve Him in some needy part of the world and live on what he would regard as starvation wages.

It is foolishness to the non-Christian when he meets Christians who are more concerned about laying up treasure for themselves in heaven than becoming rich in this world.

**Matthew 6:19-20 -**

Yes, those who do not belong to the family of God very quickly misunderstand those who do belong to His family. This is due to the fact that God's people are a distinctive people.

Just as our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, was misunderstood and ostracized, so we, in a measure, must expect to share His sufferings.

**Philippians 1:29 -**

When I was in my teens, I became a member of my church and also a Sunday School teacher. But I was not a child of God. Then came the glorious day when I accepted



Christ as my Saviour. I became one of God's children and my life was wonderfully transformed.

Immediately this happened, many of my closest friends took exception to this.

One day I overheard one of them say, "Poor old Stephen, religion has got hold of him!" But he misunderstood the wonderful thing that had happened.

I had been religious before my conversion, but now it was not religion but the Spirit of God who had gotten a hold of me and had worked in my heart the miracle of the new birth.

When I went into full time service for the Lord some years later, some of those friends of mine might well have said what one of our Lord's disciples said on one occasion -

**Mark 14:4 -**

They simply could not understand it. Fancy anyone wanting to be a preacher, a parson!

I heard once of a Christian boy who went to work in a drapery business. A customer came in to buy, then she turned and left the shop. The manager saw her leaving. He said to the boy, "What happened?"

"Well, sir," replied the boy, "she wanted thirty yards, but there are only twenty-nine-and-a half here."

The manager was exasperated. He said, "You silly boy. You should have stretched the material. You could easily have got it to thirty yards."

"I am sorry, sir," he replied. "I know the material would have stretched all right, but my conscience wouldn't!"

This made the manager angrier than ever, for he did not understand that a child of God is a distinctive and, therefore, a different person.

He probably told the boy that he would not get very far in life if he persisted with this attitude. As a matter of fact, a fellow like that does get on, for God prospers him.

**Read Psalm one.**

Some years ago I went back into a shop and said to the girl at the cash desk. "You gave me five dollars too much change just now."

She gasped, then said, "Well, I'm blown!"

I said, "We all make mistakes." She replied, "I don't mean that. I mean to think you should have come back with it!"

“Well, it is not my money,” I said. She shook her head in disbelief and said, “Most people would have kept it!”

If you become a child of God and seek to guide and govern your life by the Word of God, you will increasingly become a distinctive and different person, altogether different from those amongst whom you live and work, for -

### **2 Corinthians 5:17 -**

What else does John tell us about God’s children?

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### **3. THEIR DESTINY IS FIXED.**

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What does the future hold for the child of God?

A full answer to this important question would fill many volumes! John, however, puts several vital truths into a small compass when he says -

### **1 John 3:2 -**

1. The Lord Jesus is coming again.

John, of course, is referring to what I believe will be the world’s next great event, namely, the second coming of Jesus Christ.

We live in a wonderful age. During the lifetime of many of us we have seen some tremendous achievements by our scientists. When we think of the space projects which have developed during the past decade and the penetration of outer space by manned and unmanned projectiles, our finite minds reel. But we have yet to see the most wonderful of all space event.

This will be of God’s achievement, not man’s.

It will be the coming through outer space of Jesus Christ Himself, even our Lord and Redeemer, shall appear. The whole Bible testifies to the glorious truth of the personal return of Christ.

It not only proclaimed His first coming, but His second coming also.

In words of inspiration and authority, words that are unambiguous as to their obvious meaning, in New Testament prophecy, in the clear teaching of Jesus Himself, in words of promise, in the teachings of many of His parables and in the combined testimony of all the New Testament writers, the message rings out loud and clear -

**“Jesus is coming again!”**

This is the Christian’s blessed hope -

**Titus 2:13 -**

All the signs of the times, whether they be the religious, the Jewish, the commercial, the economic or the moral (or immoral) signs, they all declare that -

**James 5:8 -**

2. When He comes, we shall see Him as He is.

John is very emphatic when he writes -

**1 John 3:2 -**

What a wonderful thing it will be to see the Man, Christ Jesus, the One Who lived and died for us, Who rose again and is ascended now into the place of glory and majesty at the right hand of the Father!

He came first in weakness, but when He comes the second time, He will come in power and great glory.

**Revelation 1:7 -**

He will not come as a phantom in spirit form. He will come in person in His glorified body.

When Jesus rose from the dead, He moved among men. He ate with them. He spoke with them. He was seen by them. When the time came for Him to ascend to His Father, they saw Him go in that heavenly body up to the throne of God where He is now waiting.

**Hebrews 10:13 -**

**Acts 1:11 -**

3. When we see Him, we shall be like Him.

**1 John 3:2 -**

What a transformation will take place! Think of it: in the twinkling of an eye we will be

changed and will be like Him! What a glorious prospect for every child of God!

The psalmist anticipated all this when he wrote -

**Psalm 17:15 -**

We are so unlike Him now but we know something. We are absolutely sure of something-

**1 John 3:2b -**

and we shall -

**Romans 8:29b -**

Yes, our destiny is fixed.

Of course, it is true to say that every man's destiny is fixed according to his attitude toward Christ and relationship with Christ. But, for the child of God, what John is writing about here is gloriously true and nothing can alter it.

Jesus is coming back! When He comes, we shall see Him and, when we see Him, we shall be like Him.

All earth's trials, testings and personal sorrows are only 'till He come' and when He returns, in a moment everything will be changed for us.

I once heard a friend of mine tell of two people. One was a very successful, wealthy business executive who went to his office each day in a chauffeur-driven car. The other was the little woman who cleaned his office and who came from a very poor home indeed.

Observing these two people, it would be easy to say that the man had everything that he or anyone else could possibly wish for, whereas the little woman had practically none of this world's goods.

Yet, said my friend, the time would come when she, because she was a child of God, would gain everything, whereas he, because he was not a child of God, would lose everything.

John says -

**1 John 3:2b -**

Well, everything will change completely.

In the light of this story, how will it be with you? Are you a child of God? 'It doth not

yet appear.....’

How will it appear in that day, when this life is over.....?

But I want you to notice that John tells us one more thing. He says that, because our dignity is great, our distinctiveness is marked and our destiny is fixed, we have a great responsibility to live as God’s children in a way which will please and glorify Him.

This is the practical outworking of our new status as members of God’s family. It is particularly applicable to us in view of the imminent return of the Lord.

If God’s children are waiting for Jesus to return, how should they be living?

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#### 4. THEIR DUTY IS CLEAR.

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##### **1 John 3:3 -**

If we are expecting the Lord to come, we will adjust our lives accordingly. We will live very carefully. We will purify ourselves.

##### **2 Corinthians 7:1 -**

We will have an especially tender conscience about sinful and doubtful things in our lives. We will want, above everything else, to live in ways that are well-pleasing to the Lord. Then, should He come suddenly, we will not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

##### **1 John 2:28 -**

What a practical hope the truth of the second advent is! It spurs us onto holy living and sacrificial serving.

If Jesus might come today, I shall be careful what I do, where I go and how I speak.

I shall want to be ready to meet Him and see His smile of approval.

As His child I shall want to be an obedient, loving child who brings pleasure and joy to my Father and to my brothers and sisters in the family circle of the redeemed.

In view of the fact that Jesus is soon coming back again, is there any adjustment that you should make in connection with your private life, your home, your daily work or in relation to your service for the Lord?

Is all well between you and your Saviour, between you and your brothers and sisters in Christ?

For -

**1 John 3:3 -**

***NOTES***

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# ***DISCIPLES***

## **STUDY 4**

**Scripture Portion: John 18:17**

### **John 18:17 -**

Over and over again in the New Testament believers are called disciples.

So, what is a disciple? A Christian disciple is one who learns of Christ, follows Him and obeys Him.

The Pharisees had their disciples whom they taught to fast and used for their own ends.

### **Matthew 22:16 -**

John the Baptist had his disciples who fasted.

### **Matthew 9:14 -**

Jesus, in the days of His flesh, had His disciples. These were the apostles whom He chose to be with Him.

### **Mark 3:14 -**

They were referred to as His 'twelve disciples'.

### **Matthew 11:1 -**

In other places, the term is applied to all who followed the Lord, many of whom went back and walked no more with Him.

### **Read John 6:60-66.**

Christ has His disciples today, very many of them, throughout the whole world.

Broadly speaking, of course, every Christian is a disciple. Yet there is a very real distinction which ought to be made between becoming a Christian and being a disciple.

There is a sense in which it is possible to be a Christian, to be saved and to know that your sins are forgiven, yet not to tread the path of discipleship, for to be a disciple means to be a disciplined Christian.

The moment a man accepts Christ and trusts Him as his personal Saviour, that moment he becomes a Christian, but a disciple is one who follows on to know the Lord.



**Hosea 6:3 -**

A disciple is one who, like Mary of Bethany, sits at the feet of Jesus and learns of Him with a view to do His bidding.

**Luke 10:39 -**

Discipleship, therefore, is a costly business.

A true disciple of Jesus cannot be content simply to know that he has an insurance policy which guarantees him a place in heaven. Salvation does not cost us anything, but to be a disciple of Christ is a very costly business indeed.

The conditions of salvation are repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. But, the conditions of discipleship are quite different and are extremely demanding.

With this thought in mind, in the words of scripture, let us ask the question, "Art.....thou also one of this Man's disciples?"

**John 18:17 -**

We are, of course, using these words as a convenient text for this study. What a personal and challenging question it is!

The Man referred to was 'the Man Christ Jesus.'

**1 Timothy 2:5 -**

The one to whom the question was addressed was Peter. The questioner was a girl who minded the outer door of the high priest's palace.

What is your answer to it?

Perhaps it will be easier to answer with a definite 'yes' or 'no' after looking at some of the marks and conditions of discipleship which were laid down by our Lord Himself.

If we are meeting these conditions, we can justly claim to be His disciples in the true sense of that word. If, on the other hand, we are not meeting these conditions, then we are not disciples in a practical and experiential sense. It is only as we have submitted ourselves voluntarily to His discipline that we can really claim to be His disciples.

What are the conditions of discipleship? What are the marks of a true disciple of Christ?

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THE FIRST CONDITION AND MARK OF DISCIPLESHIP IS HATING.

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This sounds very strange, but we are assured that it is, nevertheless, true.

**Luke 14:26 -**

This is our Lord's first condition and mark of discipleship. Notice how emphatically He states it - 'if any man.....hate not.....he cannot.....'

But surely our Lord taught that we should love one another and that we should not hate anyone? Does He really mean that, in order to be His true disciple, we must hate those who are nearest and dearest to us?

No! What He meant was that we must give Him the supreme place in our lives. We must love Him better than we love anyone or anything else. He must come first in our affections. There must be no rivals.

If a situation arises when we must make the difficult choice between obedience to a parent or obedience to Christ, then our love for Him will make us put His will first.

Some years ago I met a fine Christian girl who had been engaged to be married. Suddenly, however, she broke the engagement. Her parents and friends were very distressed about it, especially when they found that she still loved the man very much.

Why then did she break the engagement?

She did it because she had discovered that her fiancé had begun to gamble and had won a large sum of money. She realized that his increasing obsession with gambling was inconsistent with her Christian profession. She felt it was something that could be displeasing to the Lord. Thus she was faced with a conflict of loyalties. Should she please John or Jesus?

After a battle, she gave in. She knew that Jesus must come first. This inevitably meant 'hating' John. She loved him. It was a very costly thing to give him up, but Christ must have first place in her life, whatever the cost. So, she broke the engagement.

I will always remember the shock I received when the impact of the following verse really struck me for the first time -

**Matthew 10:34-37 -**

If it is a question of father or Christ, mother or Christ, it must be Christ first, every time. Then, when Christ has the rightful place in our life, we shall love our parents all the more!

"Art.....thou also one of this Man's disciples?" Does He have the pre-eminence in your life?

**Colossians 1:18 -**

Do you hate anybody or anything that would come into your life usurping Christ's rightful place as your Lord and Saviour? Is He first in your pleasures, in your friendships, in your business, in fact, in every part of your life?

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## **2. THE SECOND CONDITION AND MARK OF DISCIPLESHIP IS CROSS-BEARING.**

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**Luke 14:27 -**

Notice here again that these words are very clear and emphatic - 'whosoever doth not.... cannot.....'

What does this mean?

Our Lord was saying that, if we are not bearing His cross and going after Him, we are not His true disciples.

What, then, does it mean to bear the cross?

It does not refer to the various troubles and trials which beset everyone in this life, about which we sometimes hear people say, "Oh, that is my cross!" If the reference is to all these daily burdens that we are called upon to bear, then we are all bearing the cross. But that is not the meaning here.

To bear the cross, to take up the cross and to follow Jesus is voluntarily to share His reproach and suffering and to do it for His sake. To Jesus, the cross meant suffering and shame, the laying down of His life. This is the meaning of -

**Hebrews 12:2 -**

If we are to be His disciples, we must be willing to share these things with Him, to say with Him -

**Luke 22:42 -**

To be His disciple means to be hated, persecuted and misunderstood as He was.

To take up the cross means that we are willing to bear all this out of love for Him, who out of love for us, was willing to be numbered with the transgressors and to be crucified on Calvary.

**Isaiah 53:12 -**

When Jesus was down here on earth, Herod sought to destroy Him as a babe -

**Matthew 2:16 -**

His townsmen at Nazareth endeavored to hurl Him over the cliff -

**Luke 4:29 -**

The scribes charged Him with being in league with Beelzebub -

**Mark 3:22 -**

The people endeavored to stone Him -

**John 8:59 -**

The chief priests paid Judas to betray Him -

**Luke 22:3-5 -**

The chief priests and elders accused Him falsely before Caiaphas.

Read **Matthew 26:57-62.**

He was charged with treason before Pilate.

Read **John 19:7-12.**

Pilate condemned Him to death -

**John 19:16 -**

He was crucified between two thieves -

**Matthew 27:38 -**

Are you His disciple? How do we measure up to this test? Have we taken our stand openly for Christ? Do our friends and loved ones know that we are Christians? Are we willing to deny ourselves and, if necessary, to bear shame and suffering for Him?

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5. THE THIRD CONDITION AND MARK OF DISCIPLESHIP IS FORSAKING.

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Notice the emphatic words in -

**Luke 14:33 -**

Must I forsake all that I have? Yes.

It means that I must reach the point where I can honestly say, "I am taking my hands off my life, my home, my loved ones, my money, my possessions.....and all that I have hitherto looked upon as my own. I will henceforth look upon all these as His and will no longer have any claim to them."

It might be helpful to make a list of the things you regard as 'yours.' For example, this might include your wife, your children, your home, bank balance, your car, your house, etc. Do you recognize that, in the deepest sense, these people and things are His? They are not yours at all!

This is the true meaning of discipleship.

The word 'forsake' here means 'to renounce all personal claim to.'

So, when I forsake all that I have in order to be a disciple of Christ, it means that I renounce all personal claims to the people and things I have hitherto regarded as mine. In the future, I will recognize that He has lent them to me on trust.

Many Christian parents have a real battle in this realm.

Take the case of the mother who gave her daughter to the Lord on the day of her birth. Some years later that girl came home and said, "Mother, God has been calling me to the mission field. Now that I am certain about it, I am going to hand in my resignation to the bank and am going to college to train."

What did the Christian mother say to this? She might have been tempted to rebel against the Lord, but did she not give her daughter to Him?

Deep down in her heart, she said to the Lord, "Thank you, Lord. She is Your child. If you want her in Africa or Japan, or anywhere else, to serve You there, that is for You to say. Humbly and thankfully I rejoice at the honor You have given to my daughter and to me, her mother. She is still mine. She is very precious to me, but, first and foremost and forever, she is Yours!"

What a difference it makes to us when we come to the happy but costly place of renunciation! For instance, if the Lord should take our loved ones or our property from us, we at once recognize that He has only taken to Himself what is really His own.

On one occasion I visited a Christian lady whose husband had been killed in a car accident. It was a shattering blow and a grievous loss. As I tried to comfort her, she said, "It is all right. He was the Lord's before he was mine. He was the Lord's first and mine afterwards."

How do we measure up to all this? 'Art.....thou also one of this Man's disciples?'

A favorite hymn of Hudson Taylor's was Thomas Oliver's "The God Of Abraham Praise." He especially loved the words:

*I all on earth forsake  
Its wisdom, fame, and power;  
And Him my only portion make,  
My Shield and Tower.*

Did that mean that Hudson Taylor wanted to forsake his wife, his children, his home? No! It meant that he abandoned first claim to any person or anything in favor of Jesus Christ.

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6. THE FOURTH CONDITION AND MARK OF DISCIPLESHIP IS CONTINUING.

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**John 8:31 -**

To 'continue' means 'to abide in' Christ, to grow up into Christ and to shape our lives in conformity to His word and His will. It means that we accept the Word of the Lord as the final authority in our lives and seek day by day to live in submission to that Word in obedience to the Lord Himself.

What He wants very often conflicts with what we want and what our worldly friends want.

You see here again, it is a costly and challenging matter to be a true disciple of Christ.

What does the Lord want of me? What will be most for His glory? What will conform most to the teaching of His Word?

Here are some very good tests to apply when we are in doubt as to whether we should take a certain course.

If I really am concerned to know whether to do this thing or not, go to this place or not,

then I should ask myself the question “If I do this.....will it help me to continue in His Word? Will it help me to demonstrate in a fuller way the reality and sincerity of my discipleship?”

How do you measure up to this condition of discipleship? Are you reading, meditating and feeding upon the Word of God in order that you may know what His will is and then honestly seek to do it?

The psalmist loved God’s Word very much. He said on one occasion -

**Psalm 119:97 -**

**Psalm 119:103 -**

In another place he said -

**Psalm 119:32 -**

David, you seem to be in a great hurry! Why are you running?

“Oh, I am running as fast as I can to do God’s will!” he replies.

That is the mark of a true disciple of Jesus.

Are you one? Art.....thou also one of this Man’s disciples?

But, there is one final thing that must be mentioned before we leave this subject of Christian discipleship. It is very important, as are the other conditions and marks of discipleship. But, it is perhaps the most challenging of them all.

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## 7. THE FIFTH CONDITION AND MARK OF DISCIPLESHIP IS LOVING.

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**John 13:35 -**

Love is the badge of discipleship which the world will recognize. Notice that our Lord said “If ye have love one to another.....” He did not say, “If you pretend to have love or talk about it, or sing about it.”

Moreover, He did not say, “By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye love Me.” He said, “.....if ye have love one to another.”

This links up with -

**Galatians 6:2 -**

This is the law of love.

**2 John 5 -**

We could also link up with -

**Romans 12:9 -**

that is, without pretense, with sincerity, let it be the genuine thing! Yes, and we could link it up with -

**Ephesians 4:32 -**

What a word that is!

Well, in this matter of loving your brothers and sisters in Christ, “Art.....thou also one of this Man’s disciples?”

Our study of the meaning of discipleship has taught us that one thing that our Lord demands from all who would be His disciples is reality, complete sincerity, one-hundred-percent devotion and utter loyalty to Him.

His demands are stern. His standard is high.

It is a wonderful thing to be a Christian, but to be a truly dedicated, out-and-out disciple of Jesus is more wonderful still.

There is a sense in which it is easy to become a Christian but very hard to become a true disciple of the Lord. Therefore, before setting out on the pathway of Christian discipleship, it is necessary to count the cost.

Read **Luke 14:28-33**.

We must count the cost!

Sometimes we say, “I will follow Christ wherever He leads, counting not the cost!”

It is a great thing when we can say that and really mean it. But, before we begin to follow, and certainly before we say, “I will follow Christ wherever He leads, counting not the cost” we must begin by sitting down and counting the cost.

Jesus said so. “Art.....thou also one of this Man’s disciples?”



***NOTES***

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# ***JEWELS***

## **STUDY 5**

**Scripture Portion: Malachi 3:16-17**

### **Malachi 3:16-17 -**

Here in this passage of scripture in the last book of the Old Testament, we are told that the Lord speaks of His people by the lovely name of 'Jewels.'

In the last book of the New Testament we are told that John saw the heavenly city ablaze with jewels.

### **Revelation 21:18-21 -**

Perhaps we say that this is figurative language. Maybe it is, but scripture figures of speech speak of facts. The question we need to ask ourselves is, "Are we the Lord's jewels?"

*If so, how does He describe us? What is His attitude towards us?*

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**THE LORD'S JEWELS ARE VERY PRECIOUS TO HIM.**

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I remember hearing of a little girl who always used to sing in her bath.

One day she was singing 'When He cometh, when He cometh, to make up His jewels.....'  
When she came to the last verse, she sang -

*Little children, little children,  
Who love their Redeemer,  
Are His jewels, precious jewels,  
His loved and His own.*

She was only seven years old at the time, but this was not too young for the Holy Spirit to work in her heart. Suddenly she realized what she was singing and received the Lord into her heart as her personal Saviour.

Years afterwards, when she was asked to give her testimony, she would say, "I became a Christian when as a very little girl, I was singing in the bath!"

She became one of His jewels at a very early age and she went on to sparkle for Him over the years.

The dictionary definition of a jewel is very interesting and significant. ‘A jewel is a precious stone; anything or anyone who is highly valued.’

This begins to shed light upon these verses of scripture, as does the Amplified Bible rendering of -

**Malachi 3:17** - Amplified Bible - *And they shall be Mine, says the Lord of hosts, in that day when I publicly recognize and openly declare them to be My jewels -- My special possession, My peculiar treasure.....*

Who are ‘they?’

“They are those people whom I am gathering together to be My special possession,” says the Lord.

I have sometimes heard a father say of his little daughter, “She is a little jewel. She is a treasure!” By this he meant that his little one was very precious and deeply loved by him.

In the same way, the Lord has a people whom He calls His jewels, His precious ones, His ‘peculiar’ (or special) treasures, because He values them so very greatly and they are so precious to Him.

Who are these people of whom the Lord says, “They shall be Mine?”

The particular company to whom He is referring, who are so precious to Him and are so highly valued by Him, are those who have been born into His family -

**John 3:3** -

baptized into His body, who are Christians and who thus constitute the true church of God.

**1 Corinthians 12:13** -

What amazing grace this is that the Lord should make us His jewels and should tell us that we are very precious to Him!

Now, why are Christians so precious to the Lord?

If we are His jewels, why does He value us so much?

**a. *Like jewels, we are God's creation.***

No man can make a jewel. No chemist has ever been able to make a genuine diamond, sapphire or ruby. These are the amazing and perfect products of our great Creator God. There can be no worthy counterfeit of His marvelous creative handiwork.

**Ephesians 2:8-9 -**

Likewise, no man can make a Christian. Only God can do that. If we, by grace, are the Lord's jewels, this is not due to any striving or resolution on our part or on the part of anyone else. It is due altogether to the sovereign work of God in our lives.

**John 1:13 -**

The same God Who created this wonderful world in which we live, also made us anew in Christ Jesus.

**2 Corinthians 5:17 -**

There are counterfeit Christians, just as there are counterfeit jewels. There are those who have a form of godliness but they 'deny the power thereof.'

**2 Timothy 3:5 -**

They are 'paste' jewels. They are not part of God's new creation by virtue of His sovereign grace and the miracle of the new birth. God's jewels, Christians, have been made in the divine workshop. They have been 'created in Christ Jesus.'

**Ephesians 2:10 -**

**b. *Like jewels, we are a very rare people.***

Why are jewels so rare and are, therefore, so very expensive to buy?

If we could dig up sapphires, emeralds and diamonds in our garden, they would cease to be of great value. If we could gather them up on the seashore, they would no longer be precious. They would be commonplace.

There are very few precious stones in the world compared with the number of pebbles on the beach. Likewise, there are few who love and serve the Lord Jesus compared with the vast numbers who ignore Him and live without Him.

Jesus referred to this when He spoke about the many who travel on 'the broad way' and the few who travel on 'the narrow way.'

**Matthew 7:13-14 -**

At the time when Malachi was writing this prophecy, there were only a few, a small remnant, an elect company, who were God's jewels. The majority were just like common stones.

Are you among the 'many' or the 'few?'

**c.     *Like jewels, we are very beautiful.***

This is an astounding thing, but, in God's sight, Christians are very beautiful indeed.

Because of their union with Christ they have upon them 'the beauty of the Lord.'

**Psalm 90:17 -**

His beauty has been imputed to them and is being imparted to them.

If we are His jewels, then He has put within us the divine life, for we have been made 'partakers of the divine nature.'

**2 Peter 1:4 -**

He has placed upon us His own beauty.

**Psalm 149:4 -**

The raiment we wear sparkles with its brilliance and splendor, for it is not ours. It is altogether of His providing.

What tremendous thing it is that, because I am a Christian, one of the Lord's jewels -

**Isaiah 61:10 -**

If we are God's jewels, then, in His sight, we are as beautiful as the Saviour Himself, for we have obeyed the injunction to -

**Romans 13:14 -**

**d.     *Like jewels, we are all different.***

Jewels in their natural state are different in size, in shape, in color and in feature, as we learn from that marvelous description of jewels in **Revelation 21**.

So are Christians different. In fact, no two Christians are alike for God is a God of infinite variety.

Some Christians are like diamonds, some are like sapphires, some are like emeralds and some are like other precious stones. Indeed, how different we are from one another and what a blessing this is!

Yes, we have all been made in the same workshop. We have all been ‘created in Christ Jesus’ but we all manifest His beauty in a different way.

**Ephesians 2:10 -**

*e. Like jewels, we are precious because of our costliness.*

Some jewels are worth immense sums of money. Indeed, some are of such great value that no adequate price can be placed upon them.

But, think of the cost of our redemption. Think what it cost the Lord to purchase us and make us His own!

Peter tells us -

**1 Peter 1:18-19 -**

We who are the Lord’s own jewels are infinitely precious to God because He gave His own Son to shed His blood and die for us, in order that we might be bought with a price.

**1 Corinthians 6:20 -**

These, it would seem, are some of the reasons why God calls His people His jewels.

But this leads us to ask an important question which Malachi answers for us in his prophecy.

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### THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LORD’S JEWELS.

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**Malachi 3:16 -**

It is interesting to notice that this verse begins ‘Then.....’ to which we ask ‘When.....?’

The answer is simply this, that, when the majority of people were out of touch with God and were turning their backs upon Him and going their own way, ‘then’ there emerged a company of people who were quite different.

They were His jewels.

We notice that they were marked out by three characteristics.

1. Reverence.

They feared the Lord and spake often one to another. The fear described here, is not a slavish or a cringing fear. It means that they revered the Lord and were sensitive to His feelings. They were, therefore, concerned to do those things which would bring pleasure to Him.

There was a time when I greatly 'feared' my father. Although he loved me, and because he loved me, he would discipline me.

I knew that, if I disobeyed him, he would punish me, which he did many times. I feared his heavy hand!

However, there came a time when I began to fear him in a different way. I feared to grieve him for by now I had come to realize what a fine father he was and I loved and respected him.

This is exactly what we read concerning God's people. They reverence and love Him. They fear to do anything that will displease or sadden Him.

Do you fear the Lord like this? Do you serve Him 'acceptably with reverence and godly fear?'

**Hebrews 12:28 -**

2. Testimony.

They spoke often one to another. This is the second characteristic of God's people, His jewels. It is clear from the context that they spoke together of the Lord Himself and of all His wondrous doings. Their lips were full of praise and testimony. Like the psalmist they said continually -

**Psalms 66:16 -**

How frequently we fail just here! It is so possible for Christians to meet together to spend a great deal of time in one another's company and yet not talk very much about the Lord.

This is strange when we remember who He is and all that He has accomplished to make us His own, when we recall that He is our Saviour, our Shepherd and our dearest Friend.

Read through the psalms with this thought in mind and see how frequently the writers break out in praise and testimony as they meditate upon the Lord's greatness and His grace.

How is it that, out of full hearts, we do not talk more of His love and grace?

**Matthew 12:34 -**

Do we talk about Him when we meet together with other Christians?

Do we testify of Him to those who do not know and love Him but who need Him so much?

3. Meditation.

They thought upon His Name.

Perhaps the order of these three characteristics should be changed thus: reverence, meditation, testimony. Testimony arises out of, and bursts forth from, meditation.

But, what or who was the subject of their meditation?

Malachi tells us that the Lord's people 'thought' upon His Name. That means they constantly meditated upon the glory of His Person and the far-reaching benefits of His saving work on their behalf.

There is something very interesting here. The name by which the Lord is most spoken in the prophecy of Malachi is that of 'THE LORD OF HOSTS.'

God is referred to in this short book no less than twenty-five times as 'THE LORD OF HOSTS.' This speaks of His power and His greatness as the victorious God of battles.

Many Christians today are worried by feelings of insecurity. The reason is that they have forgotten that their God is 'THE LORD OF HOSTS.' He is the victorious One.

However dark and threatening the situation is in the world, or however discouraging or disappointing personal circumstance may be, God is on the throne. In due time, He will come forth to our deliverance as 'THE LORD OF HOSTS.'

How good and profitable it is to think about all this and to encourage our hearts in the greatness and power of our God.

Are these three characteristics of the Lord's people, His jewels, true of us?

*Following are three responses of the Lord to His jewels.*

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1. THE LORD LISTENS TO HIS JEWELS AND DELIGHTS IN THEM.

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Look at these wonderful words -



**Malachi 3:16 -**

When the people of God met together and talked about the Lord and rejoiced in Him, He bent down from heaven to listen to them and to receive their worship.

After the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord, two of His friends were walking home along the Emmaus road. They were deeply troubled and very perplexed. Then we read these lovely words -

**Luke 24:15 -**

They did not recognize Him at the time, but they invited Him into their home to dine with them.

**Luke 24:30-31 -**

What was the result?

**Luke 24:32-35 -**

They longed to tell others of their meeting with Him. It is this kind of spontaneous, live, meaningful testimony that causes the Lord to listen and rejoice.

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**2. THE LORD RECORDS THEIR HISTORY.**

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How amazing!

Malachi tells us that, when the Lord heard the conversation and testimony of His children, He caused -

**Malachi 3:16 -**

The fact that the book of remembrance was written 'before Him' indicates that every detail in that book was recorded with absolute accuracy.

What is this book?

It is not the Lamb's Book of Life, which contains the names of all God's jewels -

**Revelation 13:8 -**

The book spoken of by Malachi is, I believe, the book in which the Lord records all the faithful services rendered by His children. What surprises we shall get when that book is opened!

Think of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, looking into that book. Think of his joy as he sees that 'the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church,' that his blood was not spilt in vain but that a great harvest has resulted from his death.

What surprises we shall get when we look into that book and see that God did answer our prayers, that He did save a soul when we preached to that small congregation on that wintry night and that, in fact, He has blessed and prospered all the services rendered faithfully in His Name!

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**3. THE LORD GUARANTEES THEIR SECURITY.**

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The Lord says of His own -

**Malachi 3:17 -**

What day?

The day when Jesus comes again, when all the dead and all the living believers are raised, changed and glorified.

**1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 -**

He says, ".....when I make up My jewels....." This surely suggests that He has a specific number of jewels. Thank God, not one will be missing 'in that day,' as we learn from -

**Psalm 87:6 -**

He will count to see that all His jewels, His own, are there, safe and secure in His presence.

Thus, the word of Jesus Himself will be fulfilled -

**John 6:37 -**

**Malachi 3:17 -**

How wonderful is the grace of God!

“When the roll is called up yonder, I’ll be there!” Will you?

*When He cometh, when He cometh  
To make up His jewels,  
All His jewels, precious jewels,  
His loved and His own.*

*Like the stars of the morning,  
His bright crown adorning,  
They shall shine in their beauty,  
Bright gems for His crown.*

***NOTES***

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# ***SERVANTS***

## **STUDY 6**

**Scripture Portion: Acts 20:18-21**

### **Acts 20:18-21 -**

The words which we underline for this study are “serving the Lord.” In the context in which these words occur, we have an inspired portrait of a true servant of the Lord. I am sure that this is the desire of everyone of you to be a true servant of the Lord.

Paul was giving his charge to the elders at Ephesus. In it he incorporated his own personal testimony concerning the way in which he had endeavored to serve the Lord. You see, we who know and love the Lord are not only His children and members of His family; we are also His servants.

This is not a self-imposed designation. It is not with any kind of presumption that we have taken it upon ourselves to call ourselves God’s servants. It is God Himself who has made us and who describes us and uses us as His servants.

Paul speaks of himself and Timothy, his son in the faith, in this way -

### **Philippians 1:1 -**

Here, therefore, were an older man and a much younger man, who worked together, prayed together and had fellowship together as fellow believers. And both were servants of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus is described in scripture as the Servant of Jehovah. He is unique in this respect as He is presented to us as the perfect Servant.

### **Isaiah 42:1 -**

Among his followers, however, Paul the apostle was the divinely appointed servant of excellence.

All that we see and learn of him, in the record of his work and in the content of his writings, place him before us as the perfect example of a Christian servant.

We are, therefore, fully justified in looking at Paul and asking, “What are the marks of a true servant of the Lord?”

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**A SURRENDERED WILL.**

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The words 'serving the Lord' have in them the whole idea of being a slave. Paul's will had been brought into complete subjection to the Lord's will for him.

In another place he describes himself as 'the prisoner of Jesus Christ' -

**Ephesians 3:1 -**

Again, in reference to the Lord, he says -

**Acts 27:23b -**

In other words, he describes himself as the Lord's willing slave.

This surrender of his will to the will of the Lord, this capitulation from the service of self to the service of Christ, took place right at the beginning of his Christian life, when he said -

**Acts 9:6 -**

He had come to realize his identification with the Lord Himself, Who, in the voice of prophecy, had said -

**Psalms 40:7-8 -**

This is the first mark of a true servant of the Lord. He realizes and enters into the truth of George Matheson's words -

*My will is not my own,  
'Til Thou has made it Thine:  
If it would reach the Monarch's throne  
It must its crown resign.*

*It only stands unbent  
Amidst the clashing strive,  
When on Thy bosom it has lent  
And found in Thee its life.*

How do you fit into this pattern? Is your will laid down? Have you surrendered what you want? Have you been bowed in subjection to what God wants?

So many of us call ourselves servants of the Lord. But, do we, in fact, serve Him or do we just serve ourselves or other people?

If we want to truly be effective in the service of our Master and would enter into the true

meaning of Master-servant relationship, we must be ready to say these beautiful words of Frances Ridley Havergail -

*Take my will and make it Thine,  
It shall be no longer mine.*

We know this to be true in theory, as it were, but do we know it by experience?

A true servant of the Lord is one who comes to the place where he can say, in the words of his Lord -

**Luke 22:42b -**

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### A HUMBLE MIND.

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**Acts 20:19 -**

Paul here tells us that he serves the Lord 'with all humility of mind' or, as the words mean, 'with all lowliness of mind.'

In other words, a servant of God must be like the Saviour Himself who said -

**Matthew 11:29 -**

If there is any position or calling in the world where pride, self-esteem and self-importance should have no part, it is here in the service of the Lord. The qualification for service is meekness - Christ-likeness!

The man who is weak and powerless in himself in that he has -

**Philippians 3:3b -**

is the man who can become spiritually strong -

**Ephesians 6:10b -**

For such a man can say with Paul -

**1 Corinthians 12:10b -**

Someone asked an old saint what is the first Christian virtue. “Humility” was the reply.

“What is the second virtue?” asked the questioner, to which the old Christian replied, “Humility.” “And the third virtue?” persisted the questioner. And the old saint again answered, “Humility!”

In the service of the Lord, there is no room for self-seeking, for self-importance or for the spirit of pride to take over, “who loved to be first.”

### **3 John 9 -**

As we think about this mark of humility in the apostle Paul, we are brought back to Paul’s Master for, though He was so glorious and great and was one with His Father God, in the stoop of His incarnation -

### **Philippians 2:7-8 -**

This is the mind that must be in us. This is the disposition that must characterize us. Paul says -

### **Philippians 2:3 -**

### **Philippians 2:5 -**

Jesus once said -

### **Matthew 20:26-28 -**

Perhaps this is one of the most challenging and humbling statements in the Bible.

Even Jesus, great though He was, came not to be waited upon, but to wait upon and minister to others.

We see an illustration of this when He washed the feet of His disciples -

### **John 13:4-5 -**

What a manifestation of His lowliness! What need there is for us, who profess to be His servants, to be like Him in this respect.

This is a saving virtue in the Christian work, for when there are tensions, upsets, divisions among those who are engaged together in the service of God, the cause is nearly always pride on the part of one of the parties. Somebody wants to have his own way or to have the last word, someone is inflexible -- proud.



Where there is a humble mind in a Christian servant, the devil can gain no ground.

Where there is pride, he can, and he will, come in like a flood.

**Isaiah 59:19 -**

Ministers, deacons, elders, missionaries are sometimes proud. This is sad for those who serve the Lord, for in public or in private must have a humble mind -

**Proverbs 23:7a -**

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**A COMPASSIONATE HEART.**

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Paul tells us that he served the Lord with many tears. He was a man who had a compassionate heart.

**Acts 20:19 -**

How this man of tears puts us to shame. How cold our hearts are, how dry our eyes. How few of us know what it is to weep over others.

Paul knew what it was to shed agonizing and compassionate tears over sinners who needed to be saved, over saints who had fallen by the way or who needed to know more of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

A Salvation Army officer once wrote to General Booth telling him that in his most difficult sphere of service, he was distressed because he seemed to get no results from his labors. The General sent back a message of two words - "*TRY TEARS!*"

Also, I quote from -

**Psalm 126:6 -**

Brethren, where are our tears? Where are my tears? Lord, give us back our tears.

As servants of the Lord Jesus we need a surrendered will, a humbled mind and a compassionate heart.

Paul tells us of something else we need.

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## **4. A STEADFAST SPIRIT.**

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### **Acts 20:19 -**

Paul speaks of the temptations and testings which befell him from the Jews.

Did you ever know of a servant of the Lord who was not tested?

What terrific testings came into Paul's life. At every turn and in every circumstance, he was put under intense pressure from the devil and from the enemies of the gospel, all of which were permitted by the Lord for the furtherance of the gospel and for the good of His servant.

We have a very powerful enemy. If he cannot get us down in one way, he will most certainly try to do so in another way. He never gives up and we must never give way.

To be more than conquerors in the face of trials and adversities and testings, we need to be men and women of a steadfast spirit, otherwise, we shall soon give up.

### **Romans 8:37 -**

### **Proverbs 24:10 -**

Thank God, we have a mighty Refuge to which we can fly at such times.

### **Proverbs 18:10 -**

If we are to be qualified and effective servants of the Lord, we need grit as well as grace. For instance, if we are called to be leaders in His work, we must recognize that leadership can be a very lowly business.

I shall always be grateful for the help given to me by a friend on one occasion. I was under great pressure at the time and felt I could easily give up altogether.

This good friend, however, knowing of the attack which seemed to be leveled against me, and of my temptation to faintheartedness said, "Hold on. Leadership is always a lowly business but the Lord is on your side. All His resources are yours."

He had been, for many years, the captain of a ship. He knew from personal experience what he was talking about. He could well have given me his timely advice in the words of the scriptures -

### **1 Corinthians 15:58 -**

### **Galatians 6:9 -**

God's servants must be men and women of steadfast spirit. They must know how to be

stayed upon Jehovah; how to be still and know that God is their Refuge and Strength -

**Psalm 46:1 -**

**Psalm 46:10 -**

They must have the testimony of the psalmist -

**Psalm 142:4-5 -**

It is hard to be a true servant of God. Only those who have been given grace by God to have a steadfast spirit are truly qualified for this office. Paul's description of true servants of God is very comprehensive -

**Acts 20:19-21 -**

He could have stopped at this point and said that those who serve God must have a surrendered will, a humble spirit, a compassionate heart and a steadfast spirit, but he had something of vital importance still to say.

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#### 4. A CLEAR CONSCIENCE.

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The apostle tells us that he kept back nothing that was profitable to those to whom he ministered. This was a tremendous thing to say. All of us who serve the Lord should be able to say it. See what Paul says in -

**Acts 23:1 -**

**Acts 24:16 -**

Paul was not perfect. He made many mistakes and often failed, but no one could justly point a finger at him and accuse him of a guilty conscience. He had a clear conscience.

I wonder if we have a clear conscience when it comes to the service of God.

Do you have a clear conscience today? Only you can answer that before the Lord. Take a few moments to pause and think about it for awhile.

Paul had a clear conscience evangelistically.

That is, he discharged his responsibility towards the lost.

**Acts 20:20-21 -**

**Acts 20:26 -**

What a tremendous claim he made. See what Peter had to say about this very thing.

**1 Peter 3:15-16 -**

Have we a clear conscience with regards to the lost souls around us? Are we seeking to pay our debt to them? Only you can answer that question.

Paul had a clear conscience doctrinally.

That is, he was faithful in his proclamation of the truth. He did not withhold anything that was profitable.

**Acts 20:27 -**

A modern translation of **verse 27** renders it, and I quote, “*I never shrank from letting you know the entire purpose of God.*”

It is very easy to shrink back. Think over the tremendous statement in -

**2 Corinthians 4:2 -**

*c. Paul had a clear conscience financially.*

That is, he was not doing God’s work for personal gain.

**Acts 20:33-34 -**

There were probably many wealthy people in Ephesus, but rather than take any step or be in any position where he could be criticized and whereby so doing, God’s Name could be brought into dishonor, Paul worked for his living and made tents so that on one could say he was in the Lord’s service for personal gain.

**Hebrews 13:18 -**

4. Paul had a clear conscience experientially.

That is, so far as he knew, he was living out before the people of Ephesus the truth that he taught them. For instance, read -

**Acts 20:35 -**

Does our conduct agree with our creed? Could we say with a great preacher of a past generation, “You can take my life and write it across the sky?”

This concept is taken up in -

**2 Corinthians 1:12 -**

*e. Paul had a clear conscience spiritually.*

That is, his personal relationship with the Holy Spirit was all that it should be.

**Acts 20:22 -**

This verse might also be rendered, “*I go to Jerusalem under the binding force of the Holy Spirit.*”

**Romans 9:1 -**

Are we utterly abandoned to the Holy Spirit? Are we filled and dominated by Him. Is our life a Spirit-led life?

These, then, are the five marks of a true servant of the Lord. He is one who has -

- 1 - a surrendered will.*
- 2 - a humble mind.*
- 3 - a compassionate heart.*
- 4 - a steadfast spirit.*
- 5 - a clear conscience.*

Do you qualify? A very good question. I leave that question with you as we close this lesson.

May God bless you. Amen.

***NOTES***

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# ***STEWARDS***

## **STUDY 7**

**Scripture Portion: 1 Peter 4:10**

### **1 Peter 4:10 -**

In the course of my travels I have stayed in hundreds of homes. Some of these have been magnificent, some were less grand and some were quite humble. But, in every case, I have enjoyed much kindness and wonderful fellowship.

What were all my hosts and hostesses doing? They were opening their homes and extending to me their gift of hospitality.

In the above scripture, the apostle Peter is urging his readers to use this wonderful gift of hospitality.

In effect, he is saying, “Some of you have homes in which you live. Now, your homes are a gift from God. You are stewards to use that gift for the blessing of others and for the extension of His kingdom.”

Peter then goes on to say that all Christians should be good stewards of the manifold grace of God, or, as this expression really means ‘the many sided grace of God.’

Every Christian is a servant of God, but he is also a steward. There must, therefore, be a distinction between a servant and a steward.

What is this distinction?

A servant is one who serves and is in subjection to his master. A steward is also a servant, but the word ‘steward’ implies the idea of special responsibility.

God has entrusted certain things to us. We are responsible to Him to use them properly. For example, we are told that Eliezer was the steward of Abraham’s household.

### **Genesis 15:2 -**

In other words, Abraham had placed all the affairs of his household and property into the hands of this capable man and had made him responsible for managing all his affairs.

We have a beautiful account of the way in which David gathered together all the key people needed in order to undertake the plans for building the temple.

Incidentally, David was not allowed to build it. This became his son Solomon’s responsibility in later years.

### **1 Chronicles 28:1-2 -**

However, we read that David assembled all the princes of Israel and the stewards over all the substance and possessions of the king. Thus we see from this verse, what was the Old Testament concept of a steward.

The ten servants of whom we read in our Lord's parable in -

**Luke 19:12-13 -**

were stewards. Another translation has it - 'trade with these until I return.' Thus we see that these servants were given a responsibility. They were to trade with the pounds their Master had given to them for that particular purpose.

It was the custom for wealthy landlords to place their land, farms and property into the hands and under the direction of a manager, or a steward.

Such a man was responsible to care for and administer all the affairs related to the estate.

But, if we are God's stewards, what has He entrusted to us to dispense for Him for which He will hold us responsible?

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**OUR LIFE.**

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What a tremendous gift it is that God has bestowed upon us.

What wonderful bodies He has given to us, with minds to think, hearts to love, wills to choose and with such infinite possibilities.

Do we recognize the responsibility of stewardship with regards to our lives, to our bodies?

Paul reminds us in -

**1 Corinthians 6:19-20 -**

If we are God's stewards of our bodies, we should discipline our habits with regard to eating, sleeping, working and relaxing so that we become as fit as God would have us be for His service.



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## OUR INFLUENCE.

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God has given this to all of us and He holds us responsible as to how we use it. Our influence is a trust from God.

### **Romans 14:7 -**

We need to remember that, consciously or unconsciously, we all influence others by the way we live, talk and react to all kinds of circumstances. God has given to everyone of us some power over other lives. This imposes upon us a mighty responsibility.

How are we influencing others? Do we recognize in this aspect of our daily living that we are stewards of the Lord?

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## OUR MONEY AND OUR POSSESSIONS.

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As a matter of fact, we should not say 'our' at all for all that we have is God's. We are only His stewards over these things.

Do you have a bank balance and some investments? Do you own your own house, car, shop, business?

You are only a steward of these things. God has entrusted them to you for you to use for His glory. All these possessions of 'mine' are really His. They are only lent to me, or to you.

Regarding my house, for example, I am only the caretaker. If you 'own' a business, you are only the manager of that business.

Do you recognize this truth with regard to the matter of your possessions?

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## **4. OUR CHILDREN.**

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Those of us who are parents have been entrusted with a wonderful gift. If we are Christian parents, God has given us children as a holy trust from Himself.

Many Christian parents recognize this.

When their children are born, they give them at once to the Lord. They act upon the principle that, first of all, these children are God's children for Him to do with what He deems best. They dedicate them to God for His special service.

Many missionaries were thus given to the Lord on the day of their birth.

In fact, the parents said, “Lord, this lovely little one You have given to us is Yours first of all. You have sent him to us. Thank You for entrusting him to us. Please help us to bring him up in a way which will be glorifying to you. As the years go by, please help him to fulfil Your plan for his life.”

A true steward will rejoice at the prospect of his son or daughter being called of God.

Unfortunately, there have been many occasions when the sacrifice has seemed too great and Christian parents have rebelled and have tried to turn their children away from the mission field as their life work.

When this happens, it indicates a failure on the part of the parents to recognize that children are a trust from the Lord; who say, as did Pharaoh’s daughter said -

**Exodus 2:9b -**

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## 5. OUR TIME.

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We all have time on our hands to use as we wish. How do we use it?

Paul says -

**Ephesians 5:16a -**

This literally means ‘buy up the opportunities.’

I believe that, if every Christian recognizes his time is the Lord’s, there would be no scarcity of dedicated workers in our churches or in the Christian work generally.

It is a very sad thing that, when we the need for workers is so great, the opportunities of service are so glorious, the time is so short, so few are willing to give much, or any time to the things of the Lord.

Priorities can easily get mixed up. Time which could, and should, be invested in the kingdom of God is wasted away on secondary, secular or sometimes sinful things.

In humble recognition of the Lordship of Christ in our lives, and of His prior claim to each day as it opens and unfolds before us, we should be willing, as good stewards, to say with Frances Ridley Havergail, “Take my moments and my days.”

How do we fit into this ideal? It is God’s ideal and not man’s.

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## 6. SPECIAL TALENTS AND GIFTS.

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God has endowed all of us with some special talents. These are a trust from Him.

It may be a gift of speech, a gift of song, or a gift of hospitality in a nice home where some of God's weary servants can find refreshment.

Multitudes of men and women in the forces, students away from home, have been able to thank God for the Christian homes into which they have been welcomed and shown such love and kindness.

Many lonely people, likewise, have benefited immensely from the kindness and love of those who have opened their homes to them.

Why have these hosts and hostesses been so hospitable? It is because they have recognized their stewardship in relation to their home.

Some of the talents which God has entrusted to us are very wonderful. Who, for instance, can estimate the value of a really fine singing voice?

Those who are blessed with beautiful voices face a real test. The world is quick to spot a good voice and to encourage the owner to make his mark on the stage or platform. The financial offer is sometimes very considerable.

Some of the finest singers in the Christian world have turned down very good offers. Why?

Because their first concern has been to use their gift for the Lord and to sing the gospel to as many people as possible.

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## **7. THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.**

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We have a responsibility to the life of the gospel, to preach the gospel and to send it forth to the ends of the earth.

**1 Corinthians 4:1 -**

He also wrote -

**1 Thessalonians 2:4 -**

These are very challenging words from Paul. All the way through his many years of service, he recognized that he was a steward of the gospel and that God has entrusted this message of salvation to him, not only that he might enjoy it and rejoice in its benefits but that he might share it with others.

This, of course, is what this missions course is all about. It is to share the gospel, the wonderful good news of our Lord Jesus Christ. The good news that Jesus Christ had come into the world to save sinners and that salvation has been procured and was available to all men, was a holy deposit which God has entrusted to His servants.

Paul acknowledged this in his letter to the church at Rome.

**Romans 1:14-16 -**

He not only says, "I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome.....and I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ," but he said, "I am a debtor....."

In other words, he said, "I owe it to all men to preach the gospel to them."

This is the vision I would like you to capture.

Pause here a moment, for, if we have lost it, we need to recapture it again.

I owe the gospel to my family, to my friends, to my colleagues and to all and everyone. I am in debt to them. I am a steward of the gospel. I have been put in trust with the gospel.

Do you recognize this tremendous responsibility?

I trust that the Holy Spirit will impress it upon our minds and our conscience and our spirit man.

*Now, as we look further into this important matter of being a faithful steward of the Lord Jesus, and as we look at the various scriptures with regard to this lesson, we learn -*

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**8. SOME VERY INTERESTING AND IMPORTANT LESSONS.**

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Every Christian is a steward.

There are a number of scriptures which make this perfectly clear.

For example, Paul said -

**1 Corinthians 12:7 -**

Again, after he had mentioned a few of the gifts which have been given to the Christians, he goes on to say -

**1 Corinthians 12:11 -**

**1 Corinthians 12:14 -**

He said much of the same thing when he wrote to the Christians that were at Ephesus.

**Ephesians 4:7 -**

The apostle Peter also underlines the same truth that every Christian is a steward, for he says in -

**1 Peter 4:10 -**

If we are Christians, then we are stewards. God has entrusted us with the responsibility for which we are accountable to Him.

Christians may be good or bad stewards.

It is significant to notice that Peter was using the qualifying word ‘as *good* stewards of the manifold grace of God.’

In the Bible, we are told that there are two kinds of Christians, spiritual and carnal.

**1 Corinthians 3:1 -**

There are also two kinds of servants, faithful and unfaithful.

**Matthew 25:21 -**

There are also two kinds of vessels.

**2 Timothy 2:20 -**

And there are two kinds of stewards, good and bad.

The period in which we are to exercise our stewardship is until the Lord comes.

We are here for only a limited time.

One day, and it may be soon, our earthly span will be completed. Moreover, one day soon, the Lord Jesus will come. Then the opportunity of exercising and fulfilling our stewardship down here on earth will be over.

What Jesus said in relationship to Himself is also true in relationship to each one of us

-  
**John 9:4 -**

The period of exercising our stewardship is until we die, or until the Lord Jesus Christ comes for us.

*d. We are to exercise our stewardship in the light of the coming of Christ and of the judgment seat of Christ.*

This thought adds urgency to the whole matter and challenges us to be diligent.

Every Christian will have to give an account of his stewardship.

It would be dreadful to be found wanting. In that day, we shall either 'receive a reward' or we shall 'suffer loss.'

**1 Corinthians 3:14-15 -**

Daniel Webster once was asked, "What is the greatest thought that has ever occupied your mind?"

His immediate response was, "The thought of my personal accountability to God." He was thinking, of course, of -

**Romans 14:12 -**

If we were to live more in the light of this truth, we would live more carefully and with greater discipline. Our giving would be different.

We would be more loving and considerate in our dealings with others lest we should be

-  
**1 John 2:28b -**

5. The special requirement in a steward is not success but faithfulness.

It is great to be successful, but our chief concern should be to be faithful. There is great encouragement in -

**1 Corinthians 4:2 -**

When we stand before the Lord, He will not speak of our success, but of our faithfulness. To many He will say -

**Matthew 25:21 -**

Will He say that to you? It is faithfulness and not success which will be rewarded.

6. The special mark of a steward is that he must be without blame.

Perfection is not the requirement for a steward, nor is this possible. God demands that we should be blameless, without blame and *this is possible*.

**Titus 1:7 -**

This means that we are to live day by day in such a way that no one can point a finger of blame against us for any inconsistencies in our lives.

Let me illustrate what I mean.

When I was a small boy, I spent some months with my aunt in her home in the country. One day, when she and her cousin were out, I went into the garden and decided to do some digging. I was successful - I found some potatoes!

Excitedly, I went on digging until I had unearthed and stacked up quite a pile of potatoes. I was elated. But, when my aunt returned, I learned to my consternation that those 'seed' potatoes had been planted only the day before.

I was wrong although my intentions were good. But, as a boy of six, I was quite blameless.

***g. Faithfulness in stewardship in this life qualifies us for special service in the life to come.***

In the parable of the nobleman, the faithful servant was commended.

**Luke 19:17 -**

So does service down here qualify us for service to which God will appoint us when we get to heaven? Yes, it means just that.

Whatever service we are seeking to do for the Lord now, if we discharge our responsibility faithfully, this will qualify us for greater service in glory.

The Lord is looking for faithful stewards.

He is the worthy Lord of His stewards so let us give Him such devotion and dedication that, in that day when we shall see Him face to face, we shall hear Him say to us "Well done."

May the Lord help us that, when we come to our end, it will be said to us of our wonderful Lord, "Well done."

Amen. Hallelujah!



***NOTES***

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# **WITNESSES**

## **STUDY 8**

**Scripture Portion: Acts 1:8**

### **Acts 1:8 -**

Our Lord is calling every one of His dear children to be witnesses. It is a word which appears many times in the Bible. He refers twice to His ancient people, the Jews, as His witnesses in -

### **Isaiah 43:10-12 -**

It was after His death and resurrection and just before His ascension that Jesus said, “Ye shall be witnesses unto Me,” referring to Christians in this age of grace.

How is the world to be evangelized? The answer is given to us here, for in this one verse we have what we might rightly call ‘the divine plan for world evangelism.’

God’s plan is that His own people should be effective witnesses to His saving grace, wherever they are and wherever they may go. This is to be the whole work of the church for the whole world for the whole age.

Incidentally, we want to notice that the word ‘witness’ is the key word in the book of **Acts**. We only have to read this inspired history of the early church to see how rapidly and how readily the first Christians got on with the job of witnessing.

Today some people think that the church is going to sink beneath the waves of humanism, atheism, and all the other ‘isms’ that are so prevalent today, but *no*.

God has witnesses everywhere. He has had them throughout the darkest periods of human history and church history. He has them today, sometimes in the most unlikely places.

In order to grasp the full significance of the privilege and responsibility of witnessing, it will be helpful if we emphasize five lines of truth which are clearly stated in **Acts 1:8**.

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### **1. THE PEOPLE GOD CHOOSES.**

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Who are the people whom the Lord chooses to be His witnesses?

Notice the personal pronoun in **Acts 1:8** - ‘ye.....you.....ye.’

In other words, God chooses men and women, not angels or supermen or even special people.

In the first instance, Jesus chose Peter, James, John and other ordinary men and women from the rank and file of life. They were to be His witnesses. They did, in fact, become His witnesses. They were very ordinary people.

On one occasion, their ordinariness was very much noticed -

**Acts 4:13 -**

Have a good look around any church and see the variety of people who are present. These are the folks God chooses to be His witnesses. Some of them may be uneducated or even illiterate, but, if they are Christians filled with the Holy Spirit and doing the will of God, they will be witnesses for Christ.

The great principle in relation to God's choice of those who are to serve Him and to witness for Him is stated in -

**1 Corinthians 1:26-29 -**

Most of the Lord's witnesses, therefore, are ordinary people, though He also chooses some people of noble rank to be witnesses for Him.

The point for us to notice from all this, however, is that God expects every Christian to be a witness. Witnessing is a necessity of a truly born-again, Spirit-filled Godly soul.

A light that does not shine, a spring that does not flow, a seed that does not grow - these are very ordinary symbols to describe that every believer that God has chosen should become witnesses for our wonderful Lord.

It is perfectly clear, then, that the people whom God chooses to be His witnesses are all those who are saved by His marvelous and wonderful grace.

Every Christian is to be a missionary. Being a missionary means being a witness for Christ and to His saving grace and power and love. Wherever there are people, then witnessing is very necessary and needful. Wherever Christians live and work, therefore, they are to be the Lord's witnesses.

If you are working in a shop you are just as responsible to the Lord to be His witness there as any missionary on the field. You are one of the people God has chosen to be His witness.

But, how does all this work out in a practical way?

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**2. THE PLAN GOD ADOPTS.**

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Wherever there is a Christian there is to be a witness. God wants airmen, soldiers, sailors, tailors, builders, grocers, bankers, nurses, chemists, teachers, we could go on and on, to be His witnesses.

What is a witness?

A witness is one who gives a testimony that is based upon personal knowledge.

A witness must tell, not what he thinks or supposes or overhears, but what he knows from his own personal experience.

A witness must give first-hand and up-to-date evidence.

A witness must be able to say, "I know that that is true. I was there when it happened."

**John 3:11 -**

**John 9:25 -**

**Acts 22:15 -**

God's plan, therefore, is that everyone of us who love the Lord and who belong to Him should tell what we have seen and heard and what we know of Him and of His wonderful grace.

But notice that our testimony is to center upon the wonderful Person of Jesus Christ Himself. "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me" ..... "Me." We are not to witness of our church, a denomination, a movement, a society, a system or a creed.

We are to witness to the glorious Person of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ Himself.

It is important to notice also that, in the case of Christian witnessing, it is not by any means to be the only manner of telling. Primarily, it is to be a matter of living. We should certainly use our lips in the service of our Lord Jesus Christ. We so easily talk about everything and everyone else, so why not about Him?

**Psalm 107:2 -**

After our Lord had healed a man, He said to him -

**Mark 5:19 -**

First of all, though, it is our consistent lives that are to witness for Christ. Notice that our verse says, “Ye shall be witnesses unto Me....”

What we are is more important than what we say. But, if our lives are witnessing for Him, then our saying will be effective and powerful.

What a glorious plan this is that the Lord has adopted for the evangelization and reaching of the world for Him. Everyone of His children is to go forth into his ordinary sphere of life and live and speak for the Lord there.

All this preparation and work that a Christian witness must have is a vital and personal experience of faith in Christ, otherwise he cannot be an effective witness by life and lip. A nominal Christian can never be a true witness. Before anyone can witness for Christ, he must really know, love and belong to Him.

We have already noticed that every Christian is to witness just where he is. Now we must see the worldwide significance of this also.

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### 3. THE PLACE GOD INDICATES.

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In **Acts 1:8**, a very definite geographical setting is indicated.

The Lord told His early followers that they were to witness in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

This was a repetition of His words in what we call “The Great Commission.”

In a more specific form as to where they were to begin and as to how they were to extend the area of their witnessing -

#### **Matthew 28:19 -**

True, a witness is not necessarily a preacher in the acceptable, formal sense of that word, yet our Lord’s intention was to make it clear that His people were to go unto all peoples everywhere telling them about the Lord and His wonderful love and salvation which were now available through faith in Him.

This inevitably means that some witnesses must leave their homes and go to other places and lands in order to obey the Lord’s commission and be His witnesses to peoples who have never heard of Him.

We are studying missions. No doubt you are aware of this. A call to be a witness is a very important aspect of missionary work and activity.

**Acts 1:8** is our authority for sending out foreign missionaries. This commission is an

absolute must on all Christians in every age.

Obedience to the Lord's commission to take the gospel to all people and to all parts of the world was, of course, the obligation of the early Christians, that some of them had to leave home, leaving their loved ones behind.

The same is true today. In my early Sunday School days, we used to sing a hymn which began "The whole wide world for Jesus." That should be our vision, to make Christ known to people wherever they are.

*This being so, consider the following true statements which are the natural application of this truth.*

In the light of Acts 1:8, as His witnesses, everyone of us should be willing to go anywhere for the Lord.

Whoever we are, whatever our age, whatever our circumstances, we should be willing to be the Lord's witnesses in that place of His choice. He may want us to take a secular job in Africa, or in India, or in South America or in Europe, primarily in order that we may live there as His witnesses.

On the other hand, He may want us to have special training in order that we may be better qualified to serve Him as a witness in the ministry, or as a missionary, in our own country or overseas.

What He asks us is that we be willing to obey Him and do what He wants us to do in the place of His choice.

Here is another consideration: He may want you to go into a hospital to be His witness there. Have you thought about that? Nobody is keen to go into the hospital as a patient, but what an opportunity such an experience presents to a Christian to witness to doctors, nurses and other patients.

In the light of Acts 1:8, young people under the age of thirty should be especially exercised as to whether or not the Lord would have them to be His witnesses where the need is the greatest.

Undoubtedly the need is greater in some lands than in others, such as in India, Africa, South America, the islands of the world, for example.

There are millions of people who have not yet heard of the wonderful name of Jesus.

Every young person who has health and strength should be willing to go anywhere for the Lord, wherever the Lord would have him or her to go and labor for Him there for the specific purpose of being His witness.

There are vast numbers of people scattered around this world of ours who need someone to go to them and tell them about our wonderful Saviour. Many of them are gripped by sin and bound by superstition.

Many of them are worshiping false gods and are devotees of false religion. They desperately need to know of the One from Whom alone they can find pardon for their sins, peace of mind and heart, and peace with God and the power to live happy, wholly useful lives.

Who will go and tell them of the Lord Jesus?

It is the job of every Christian to be a witness, but some must go where the need is the greatest. I want to emphasize this because this is very, very important that some must go where the need is the greatest.

Perhaps a fellow or a girl hearing these words today in my class is the one whom God would have leave home, friends, well paid jobs in order to go to some far off place where there are those needing to hear of Jesus and to know Him Whom is life eternal.

**John 17:3 -**

***c. In the light of Acts 1:8, all who would be His witnesses must begin in Jerusalem.***

That is to say, we must begin at home. Those to whom our Lord first spoke these words were, in fact, quite literally to begin witnessing for Him in the city of Jerusalem and, in obedience, that is exactly what they did.

The application of this to ourselves is quite simple. We are to begin to witness for Christ just where He has placed us, where we live and work and are among our own people.

If it is His will later to go to some other sphere or to some other country to witness for Him there, we must, nevertheless, begin at home.

Of course, what we are at home we shall be in any other place or sphere, no less and no more.

If we are not witnessing here, going there, wherever 'there' may be, will not have the effect of suddenly making us a witness.

Going to the mission field does not make a missionary.

Before ever a missionary goes overseas, we are to witness for Christ and be effective witnesses for the Lord at home.

God's great heart of love yearns over the whole wide world. His method of evangelizing it is to send forth living witnesses.

I always find the following scripture very challenging -

**Romans 10:13-15 -**

In the light of these words, surely we should be filled with a holy enthusiasm to make Christ known.

Being a Christian is the greatest thing in the world. Being a witness is the greatest thing in the world. The greatest favor we can do for anyone is to introduce them to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We need to ask ourselves, "Where would I be if Christ had never entered into my life?"

Then we need to think of some non-Christians who have none of the spiritual benefits which we enjoy. They are totally occupied with the things which end with the grave.

But, who is sufficient for these things?

It is never easy to be a witness for the Lord. Indeed, in ourselves we do not have what it takes.

Notice, therefore, that the divine enabling for this task was promised by the Lord Himself.

4. The power God supplies - Acts 1:8.

No one can be an effective witness without the power of the Holy Ghost, without being filled with the blessed Holy Spirit.

Before our Lord began His public ministry, He was anointed with the Holy Spirit and was able to say -

**Luke 4:18 -**

The Lord's first followers obeyed His command and waited for the promise of the Father, the endowment of power before they began witnessing for Him. I quote -

**Luke 24:49 -**



They could not have witnessed in their own strength any more than you or I can.

An effective witness must have a personal “Pentecost.” Have you had a personal “Pentecost?” Have you been filled with the blessed Holy Spirit? Take time to think and pray about this question.

How does anyone, anywhere, witness effectively for the Lord?

The secret is in -

**Zechariah 4:6 -**

The time is short. Souls are in need and are dying. We must obey the words of our wonderful Lord found in -

**John 9:4 -**

There is a great urgency in this matter of witnessing for Christ. How long do we have? I leave that question with you. Pause and think about it as you study and restudy this lesson. Think about this question very seriously. How long do we have to do it?

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## **4. THE PERIOD OF TIME GOD GIVES.**

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How much longer have we in which to evangelize the world? Until the Lord Jesus comes again.

**Acts 1:8** is followed by -

**Acts 1:11 -**

All the signs of the times proclaim the fact that the coming of the Lord is very near. If you and I would be His effective witnesses, we must be on the job now. The matter is urgent. The time is short. The need is great. Millions are lost.

The Lord says to each one of us, “I want you, and you, and you that are listening to Me in this class, you, dear brothers and sisters, to be My witnesses. Go out into the world and live for Me. Show forth to others just where you are, that you love Me and know Me. Tell them who I am, how much I love them, that I long that they should love and know Me, too. Tell them that I died for them and that I rose again and live to be their Saviour and Friend for time and for eternity.”

***NOTES***

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# ***FRIENDS***

## **STUDY 9**

**Scripture Portion: John 15:13-15**

### **John 15:13-15 -**

One of the greatest gifts that God has bestowed upon us is the gift of friendship. What a blessing it is to have a true friend.

A prominent business man with a successful career was once asked the secret of his success in life. His reply was, “When I was a young man, I had a friend.”

This comment reminds me of many wonderful friends I have had and still have. How greatly I thank God for them. A number of them are now in heaven, but their influence upon me lingers on. Many, however, are still here serving the Lord.

I owe much to them for their love and wise counsel in times of need or uncertainty.

As Christians, we rejoice in the tremendous fact that our Lord Jesus, the Son of God, our Saviour, is also our Friend. He is the best Friend of all. We can certainly apply the following scripture to Him -

### **Proverbs 18:24 -**

What a wonderful Friend is He! He is the Friend of sinners, the Friend of saints, the Friend of the lowly and bereaved. In fact, He is the Friend of all.

This is His attitude towards His own people who love Him, belong to Him and who seek to please Him.

In the light of His own words in **John 15:13-15**, we must ask ourselves, “Am I one of His friends?”

True friendship is reciprocal. It is not one-sided but mutual as written in -

### **James 4:4 -**

Are we one of His friends? That is the important question.

Please remember that our Lord in these verses is speaking to saved men and women, to true believers.

In the old dispensation, the law said, “Do this and live.” Under grace, the Lord says to those who believe on Him, “Live and do!”

We are not saved by doing, neither do we merit any saving blessing by doing. We have been saved by God’s wonderful grace. He says to us -

**John 15:14 -**

In other words, friendship with Christ implies and requires a responsibility of full and continuing obedience to Him.

*In our scripture text, we are told about the nature, the privilege, the condition and the constraint of this friendship.*

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**1. THE NATURE OF THIS FRIENDSHIP.**

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Jesus says to us, “Ye are My friends.” This at once suggests several characteristics of this friendship.

It is a unique friendship.

This is not the friendship of man with man, but of a man with God and God with man. Therefore, it is the only friendship of its kind. There is no other friendship like this. There is no relationship in the whole wide world like this or to be compared with this.

Can you think of anything more wonderful than to be able to look up to heaven and say, “The Lord of heaven and earth, the high and lofty One, God Himself, is *my* friend?”

It is a condescending friendship.

Think who it is who wants to call us His friends? It is as though a mighty king were to come to the lowest commoner in his realm and ask for his friendship. Yet the relationship we are considering just now is even more wonderful than that.

The Lord is not only great, He is holy. In contrast with Him we are very small and altogether unworthy. Yet this great and holy One wants and seeks our friendship.

How marvelous is this!

***c. It is a personal and close friendship.***

I want you to notice the pronouns “ye..... and my.....” in verse 14.

Surely nothing could be closer than that. The wonderful thing is that He is just as much your Friend as He is mine. So unique and so gracious is He that He can be equally the Friend of all of us at the same time.

Actually, the word “friend” which is used here means “bosom friend.” The Lord is not wanting us as a mere acquaintance. He desires each one of us to be His special, intimate friend.

4. It is a constant and enduring friendship.

This wonderful Friend is always with us. He never changes. He is ever the same. His love and help are always available.

**Malachi 3:6 -**

**Hebrews 13:8 -**

Recently I found myself linking together -

**John 13:1 -**

and

**Hebrews 13:5-6 -**

In all the experiences of life, Jesus is with us, giving us His friendship and He wants ours.

5. Jesus has done something for us to prove that He is our Friend and that He wants our friendship.

What has He done to prove His friendship for us?

He has died for us.

**John 15:13 -**

He has actually given His life for us.

**Galatians 2:20 -**

What greater proof could there be that He loves us and that He is our Friend and He wants our friendship?

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## 2. THE PRIVILEGE OF THIS FRIENDSHIP.

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There are many privileges in a true friendship but a very special one is mentioned here in -

### **John 15:15 -**

It could be summed up in two words - “intimate fellowship.”

You see, a servant is not in the confidence of his master. He does not know all his master’s affairs and plans. But, with a friend of the master it is different.

To be a friend of Jesus means to be in His confidence. It therefore means to share in His travail and His joys.

It is a privilege for a servant to work in the kitchens of a king’s palace. It is a far greater privilege to be a friend of the king and to live in the royal apartments.

Again and again, in the scriptures, Abraham is referred to as “the friend of God.”

### **James 2:23 -**

Why was this? Because he shared the secret things of God, he was in God’s confidence.

Another illustration of this is found in **Genesis 18:17-22** where we are told that, before the Lord sent His judgment upon wicked Sodom He shared His intention with Abraham.

Thus, because he was a friend of God, Abraham was taken into His confidence.

### **Genesis 18:17 -**

We read about the same thing in connection with Moses. The Lord spoke to him many times concerning His plans and purposes with and through the children of Israel.

### **Exodus 33:9-11 -**

The Lord also revealed many mysteries to the apostle Paul.

It is the same today, for, if we would know God’s plan for our lives, then we must qualify for His friendship because it is only to His friends that He reveals these things.

David realized this when he said -

### **Psalm 25:14 -**

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## 3. THE CONDITION OF THIS FRIENDSHIP.

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What is the condition?

**John 15:14 -**

This indicates a full submission to the Lord's authority. The Friend who calls us His friends is, after all, our Lord and Master. On one occasion He said -

**Luke 6:46 -**

This shows us that to call Christ "Lord" implies our complete submission to His sovereignty. The obvious proof of such submission is obedience.

**John 15:14 -**

There are, I believe, two things that the Lord longs for more than anything else in the lives of His followers: first, their *trust*, second, their *obedience*.

Actually, the two are one. They are inseparable. Someone might say, "But surely the Lord most of all, wants us to love Him?"

It is our love that is most precious to Him. But what is the proof of our love? It is not enough simply to say that we love Him. Where is the proof that we do actually love Him? Jesus said -

**John 14:15 -**

So, what the Lord wants from each one of us is such love to Him and trust in Him that we gladly do His bidding in all things. This obedience is unquestioning and unlimited. Read again **John 14:15**.

This is not partial or halfhearted. It is a full willing, ready obedience to do all that He asks us. It means that we are prepared to get into that position where we can say with Saul of Tarsus -

**Acts 9:6 -**

Have you ever asked the Lord this question? It is a very important question. We should pause right now and ask the Lord prayerfully, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

Is this a hard thing? No. It is always for our good and blessing.

**1 John 5:3 -**

Do you long, with all your heart, to do His bidding and to please Him in all things?

I am sure it is the desire of all of us in this class today that we be obedient and that we

also trust our wonderful Lord.

Does this include keeping the Ten Commandments?

Does this mean we must keep all the commandments of the Word of God? Well, which commandments are you not prepared to keep?

If we really want to keep His commandments, we shall find out what He wants - *and do it.*

In this passage of scripture in which our Lord is showing that His obedient children are His friends, we have two searching verses. They are found in -

**John 15:12 -**

**John 15:17 -**

As we continue to read the scriptures, we find one commandment after another. These are enjoined upon every Christian.

They are crystal clear. They are there for us to obey. They are there for our good.

Some years ago I preached a sermon on **John 15:14** and entitled it "Friends of the Lord Jesus."

Here is the outline.

### *Friends of the Lord Jesus*

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(1) *You must repent of your sin.*

Repentance is the first command that a guilty sinner has to obey.

**Mark 1:14-15 -**

**Acts 17:30 -**

(2) *You must believe the gospel.*

Coupled with the command to repent is the command to believe.

**Mark 1:15b -**

**1 Peter 4:17 -**

(3) *You must openly confess your faith in Christ.*



This is a command of our Lord Jesus Christ upon all who would trust Him as Saviour.

**Mark 5:19 -**

**Romans 10:9 -**

*(4) You must link up with the Lord's people.*

This is also a command. We are to love one another.

**John 15:12 -**

How can we do this in isolation?

My heading which you may care to use if you do any preaching, I am putting in this message for you to practice in your ministry. The Lord may give you the opportunity of ministering so I will give you a small outline that you can follow.

*(5) You must be baptized.*

This is our Lord's command.

**Matthew 28:19 -**

**Acts 2:38 -**

We believe in baptizing in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Acts 10:48 -**

*(6) You must remember the Lord in His death.*

This is love's command.

**1 Corinthians 11:24 -**

*(7) You must be available for the Lord to use.*

This is the Lord's command by the ordination of His "pierced hands."

**John 15:16 -**

This sevenfold list is not by any means complete, but, how do you fit into this picture? I believe that this is so essential if we are going to be in the service of God. I leave it with you. If you use this outline, please use it for God's glory and I pray that He will

bless it.

If to be His friend requires that we obey Him in whatsoever He asks of us, are we His friends? Are you His friend? Do you qualify? Have you, once and for all, submitted yourself to His authority? Do you recognize that He is your Master?

Are you ready to please Him in *all* things?

Then, what is it that constrains us to submit ourselves so willingly and so fully to Him as our Lord and Master?

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#### 4. THE CONSTRAINT OF THIS FRIENDSHIP.

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I believe that with all my heart, it is required of each one of us, if we are going to truly serve the Lord, that we be a friend of God. The very thing which proves Him to be our Friend is the thing that constrains us to be His friends.

What is it?

Our Lord spoke some very challenging words when He said -

#### **John 15:13 -**

Here He is referring to Himself and to what He was about to do for us. He gave His life for us. He died upon Calvary for us. The real significance is that He died in our place and as our Substitute. We deserve to die because of our sins. But, He died to bear away our sins. He was -

#### **John 1:29 -**

#### **1 Peter 2:24 -**

It is when we enter into the truth of the fact that Jesus died for us that such wonderful love constrains us to love Him in return. Paul wrote -

#### **2 Corinthians 5:14 -**

Because he gave His life for us -

**Philippians 2:8 -**

then we are saved for all eternity.

Our sins have been once and for all fully dealt with. God has accepted us and we are forgiven, justified and are guaranteed a home in heaven.

Such love brings us to our knees in gratitude.

We find ourselves loving Him with all our hearts and proving our love for Him by our willing obedience and saying of Him -

**Song of Solomon 5:16 -**

Let us remember that real friendship must be mutual. It must operate from both sides. It is not a real friendship if it is only one-sided. If we would be a friend of the Lord, then we must accept the friendship He offers to us.

He is our Friend. Are you His friend?

In the light of this lesson just concluded, I leave that question with you to think about.

***NOTES***

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# **AMBASSADORS**

## **STUDY 10**

**Scripture Portion: 2 Corinthians 5:20**

### **2 Corinthians 5:20 -**

In this classic passage of scripture the apostle Paul speaks of himself as the greatest and most effective cross-cultural ambassador to the world, though, by the use of the pronoun “we” he is referring to every Christian. Every Christian is to be an ambassador for the Lord Jesus Christ.

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#### **1. WHAT IS AN AMBASSADOR?**

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An ambassador is a representative of the throne and of the government of the country of which he is a citizen. It would be impossible for a queen, or for any head of state for that matter, to represent her government in all the countries of the world, so she sends representatives who are known as her ambassadors.

An ambassador, therefore, represents a person and a people.

The British ambassador in a foreign country represents the royal throne.

The Canadian ambassador in a foreign country represents the Canadian government and the throne.

Christians are representatives of the throne of heaven representing the Lord, the King of heaven.

They are living down here in the world, but they are the Lord’s representatives in this foreign land.

If you are a Christian, you are Christ’s representative in the world, His ambassador wherever you live, work, whether in the home, in an office, in industry, or in one of the professions.

You are a representative there of the King of heaven and of the throne of God.

You are an ambassador just where He has placed you.

I want you to think of this in a spiritual significance.

*There are two representations going on.*

In heaven our Lord Jesus is representing us.

**Hebrews 9:24 -**

Down here on earth, we are representing Him. Just as He is our Representative in heaven, so we are to be His representatives on earth.

It is a great thing to be a Christian. It is a wonderful thing to know that your sins have been forgiven. It is just marvelous to know that you are a child of God and that heaven is your home. But have you realized that the Lord has left you here on earth to represent Him?

What a wonderful responsibility!

When we pause to realize the responsibility of our being involved as God's representatives on earth, we naturally cry out, "Who is sufficient for these things? What are the resources available to us to discharge this responsibility of being the Lord's representative?"

None of us can rightly represent the Lord in our own strength, but we have all the resources of heaven behind us, just as the earthly ambassador has behind him all the backing, authority and resources of the country he is representing.

As Christ's ambassadors, we go forth in the Name of the One Who said -

**Matthew 28:18-20 -**

When an ambassador goes forth, all the resources of his earthly government are behind him. When we go forth in the Lord's name, all the resources of heaven and of the Lord Himself are available to us to enable us to be effective ambassadors for Him.

The Lord never sends us forth to do anything for Him without giving us all the power we need to carry it through.

**Exodus 18:23 -**

**2 Corinthians 6:1 -**

I saw this beautifully illustrated when I was a missionary in India some years ago.

After a tree had been felled, it was placed across a large hole in the ground. One man stepped down into this hole and took hold of one end of the saw while the partner stayed on the ground and grasped the other end of the saw.

With the man below pulling down and the man above pulling up, the saw cut its way through the tree to produce logs of the correct length and size.

This is an illustration of what is meant to be an ambassador the Christ. We work together with Him. He is above, we are below working together in perfect harmony for the accomplishment of His will here on earth. The Lord is doing His part in heaven. On earth, His ambassadors are doing their part. Each is necessary to the other.

**2 Corinthians 5:20 -**

*Notice the following qualifications for Christ's ambassadors.*

He must be a citizen of heaven.

No alien can ever represent our queen or our government of Canada in a foreign country. In like manner, quite obviously, one who is not a Christian, a citizen of heaven, cannot possibly represent the Lord to others here in the world.

A true ambassador must be 'in Christ' and 'a new creature.'

**2 Corinthians 5:17 -**

He must be one who has been redeemed.

**1 Peter 1:18-19 -**

He must be above reproach.

I am sure our Prime Minister of Canada would never send forth as his ambassador, a man or woman who was of doubtful character. The Lord requires that His ambassadors should be living lives which are above reproach.

They are to be, as Paul put it when he wrote to the Christians at Philippi -

**Philippians 2:15 -**

An ambassador is the object of the closest scrutiny in moral conduct, in word and in manner. In every relationship he must be blameless.

Whether it be in a foreign country or at home, even if the people do not want to become Christians, they may not agree with the teachings of Christ, but they must see at once that we believe on Him and are seeking to conform to His teachings.

There must be that about our daily walk that causes the people around us to recognize that we are Christians and true ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If we are to be the Lord's ambassadors, it must be seen that we are brand new people -

**2 Corinthians 5:17 -**

**c. *He must be selfless.***

An ambassador must be willing to sink his own interests completely if they conflict with the will of his sovereign. A Christian ambassador must not consider what he wants to do but what his Lord wants done.

**2 Corinthians 5:15 -**

Paul says in -

**1 Corinthians 15:31 -**

In other words, an ambassador must face up to, and enter by faith into, the experience of -

**John 12:24 -**

Are you living unto yourself or are you living unto Him?

4. He must be in constant contact with the throne.

Can an ambassador be in continual contact with his sovereign, his government if he is living hundreds of miles away? He does it by radio, by telephone, by electronic devices.

We, as Christ's ambassadors, have a better method of communicating. By prayer we can be in constant contact with the throne of God. How necessary this is if we are to be His true ambassadors.

In moments of crisis, the earthly ambassador sometimes has a private line from his government to his base in the foreign land.

We have an even more wonderful facility. We have a private line to the throne room of our King. We can be in constant touch with our wonderful Lord Who waits to guide and guard us as we, His ambassadors, seek to represent Him here on earth.

5. He must be steadfast and loyal.

Why? Because living in a foreign country he will be tempted in all kinds of ways to disaffection and disloyalty.

An ambassador must be steadfast and loyal at all times.



Paul is a great example in all this. Even when he was in prison he gladly suffered bonds for the sake of, and out of loyalty to, Christ.

**Ephesians 6:20 -**

*f. He must be a man of diplomacy.*

Diplomacy is the art of inauguration.

You and I by nature have no wisdom of our own.

**Jeremiah 10:23 -**

But we have a wonderful promise that God will fulfil it in us if we will ask Him.

**James 1:5 -**

7. He must know the language of the people among whom he lives.

An earthly ambassador must know at least two languages for he represents his government in a foreign country.

Apart from his own language, he needs to know the language of the people in the foreign country.

God's ambassadors speak the language of this world but they also need to know how to speak the language of heaven, especially the language of love.

Read **Luke 10:27-37**.

The cross-cultural ambassador also need to have the adaptability and skill to get to know people. How much more do God's ambassadors need this accountability and skill as they work in His foreign country of the world.

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**2. THE MESSAGE OF AN AMBASSADOR FOR GOD.**

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What is this message?

**2 Corinthians 5:19-21 -**

Paul tells us to proclaim the fact that, at an infinite cost to Himself, God has made a way of reconciliation possible. He has done this by sending His Own Son to die for our sins.

Through this sacrifice, the barrier of sin has been removed.

By His atonement, His at-one-ment, God and man have been brought together in Christ.

This vital truth is presented to us in vivid and solid terms in **verse 21**.

God has so dealt with the sin question that it is possible for Him to reach out to sinful men and women and receive and welcome them, to forgive and cleanse them, to bring them back into His family circle and into fellowship with Himself.

Though not one of us can possibly enter God's presence as we are, yet, by the sacrifice of Calvary, a way back to God has been made for every guilty sinner who will accept and avail himself of God's wonderful offer of salvation.

God has devised means whereby His banished ones might not be expelled from Him -

**2 Samuel 14:14 -**

This is the message that the ambassador of God is to proclaim to men and women.

He is to tell them of God's terms of reconciliation and to press them to be reconciled to God.

The cross-cultural ambassador's message is, therefore, one of absolute certainty and of spiritual authority, for Paul tells us that in **verse 19**.

We are to proclaim it in Christ's stead. Read again **verse 20**.

Its proclamation also calls for great fidelity on the part of the ambassador.

Philip was a great ambassador, a cross-cultural ambassador -

**Acts 8:5 -**

**Acts 8:35 -**

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### 3. THE MOTIVE OF AN AMBASSADOR FOR GOD.

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What is it that constrains God's ambassadors to live for Him and to proclaim His glorious message?

There is a threefold constraint.

8. The love of God.

#### **Romans 5:8 -**

It is this love in our hearts which compels us to go forth with this message of reconciliation -

#### **2 Corinthians 5:14 -**

9. The judgment seat of Christ.

#### **2 Corinthians 5:9-10 -**

These are very solemn verses.

Paul also tells us that -

#### **Romans 14:12 -**

#### **1 Corinthians 3:13 -**

- c. The dire need of the lost.*

#### **2 Corinthians 5:11 -**

The fact that men are lost and bound for a Christless eternity should stir us to live so that we truly represent our Lord. But, more than that, it should stir us to proclaim with passion the message that He has committed to us.

This passion was in the heart of the prophet Isaiah when he wrote -

#### **Isaiah 62:1 -**

And it was certainly in the great apostle Paul when he wrote -

#### **Romans 9:2-3 -**

It is the passion of our beseeching God that burns within us that becomes a part of us and that finds its expression as we pray in Christ's stead for men that they be reconciled to God.

I sum up this message "The Call to Cross-Cultural Ambassadorship" by quoting a short poem.

**THE MASTER CALLS**

*The Master calls: "Arise and go."  
How blest His messenger to be.  
He Who has given thee liberty,  
Now bids thee set the captives free.  
Proclaim His mighty power to save,  
Who for the world His life's blood gave.*

***NOTES***

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