
***FOLLOWING
ON
TO KNOW
THE LORD***

STUDIES 1 - 10

TEACHER MANUAL

Stephen Nemeth Lectures

Following On To Know The Lord

Studies 1 - 10

Teacher Manual

TABLE OF CONTENTS		
Study	Title	Pages
1	Being Sure Of One's Salvation	1
2	Confessing The Lord Before Others	10
3	Every Christian's Greatest Need	18
4	The Kind Of Church To Join	26
5	The Supreme Importance of Prayer	36
6	The Wonder Of God's Guidance	45
7	A Lesson In Stewardship	53
8	Winning The Lost To The Saviour	61
9	Getting The Missionary Vision	69
10	Triumphing In Trouble	76

Stephen Nemeth Lectures

BEING SURE OF ONE'S SALVATION

STUDY 1

Scripture Portion: 1 John 5:1-21

The purpose of this series of studies is twofold:

(1) To give practical help and instruction to young Christians, to those who have only just started in the Christian life.

(2) To offer definite Bible teaching to all Christians, especially to show how we may -

2 Peter 3:18 - *But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.*

and to -

Hosea 6:3 - *Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.*

As we proceed with these studies we shall see what a glorious, happy and triumphant experience it is to be a Christian and to be going on with the Lord -

abiding in Him -

John 15:4 - *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.*

confessing Him before others -

Matthew 10:32-33 - *Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.*

33 But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

enjoying fellowship with Him and with His children -

1 John 1:7 - *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

Hebrews 10:24-25 - *And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:*

25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

winning others to Him -

John 1:41-42 - *He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.*

42 And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.

and looking for His coming again -

Hebrews 9:28 - *So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*

The first essential, if we are to progress in the Christian life, is that we should be absolutely sure about our own salvation. It is not enough to be saved. We must *know* that we are saved. God's will is that we should not be safe, but that we should *be sure* we are safe!

He loves everybody -

John 3:16 - *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

Romans 10:12-14 - *For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.*

13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

He longs for all men to be saved -

2 Peter 3:9 - *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

He also desires that all who are His should know it.

Compare -

John 20:31 - *But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.*

1 John 5:13 - *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*

The fact is, however, that many Christians have no assurance of their salvation. This lack of assurance is most unsatisfactory for the following reasons. Unless we are sure of our own salvation -

- our *TESTIMONY* will be stifled.

Psalm 107:2 - *Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy;*

- our *SERVICE* will be stunted.

Daniel 11:32 - *And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.*

- we shall not *GROW* spiritually.

Ephesians 4:15 - *But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:*

- we shall *LACK* peace, joy, confidence and power with
God and with men.

2 Timothy 1:12 - *the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed:*

for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

The world and the professing Christian think it is a great presumption for anyone to say that they know they are saved! But listen to -

Job -

Job 19:25-27 - *For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:*

26 And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:

27 Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.

Paul -

Romans 5:1 - *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:*

Ephesians 1:7 - *Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;*

1 Timothy. 1:12 - *And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;*

Peter -

1 Peter 1:3-8 - *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*

4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

John -

1 John 2:12 - *I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.*

1 John 3:14 - *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.*

The early Christians certainly had no doubts about their salvation. If we are saved we should have no doubts concerning ours.

Now, the one condition of salvation is faith in the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 3:16 - *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

Romans 1:16 - *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

Acts 16:30-31 - *And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?
31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*

It is by believing that we are saved.

Here are three reasons why I, as a believer, know for certain that I am saved.

1. HIS WORK FOR ME MAKES ME SURE.

Our salvation depends entirely upon what the Lord Jesus has done for us. It is not DO, but DONE.

*Upon a life I did not live,
Upon a death I did not die,
Another's life, Another's death,
I stake my whole eternity.*

Our feelings may and will change, but the fact that He in Whom we are trusting has once and for all shed His blood to redeem and to save us, is an accomplished fact. That fact can never alter or change.

Hebrews 9:28 - *So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*

Upon the cross of Calvary, the Lord Jesus, in His death, fulfilled all the requirements of the broken law for those who believed on Him. Therefore the law can now have no claim on them whatsoever. As believers, we have already passed out of death unto life. We shall never come into condemnation.

John 5:24 - *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*

Read what the Lord said in **Exodus 12:13** - *And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.*

The same is true today. I know I am saved because the blood has been shed. My deliverance from God's righteous judgment is therefore absolutely certain.

1 Peter 1:18-19 - *Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; 19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:*

John 20:20-21 - *Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.*

As I gaze, by faith, at the wounds of my Saviour and trust in His atoning blood, I know that I am every bit as safe in Christ as the Israelites were in their homes when, by a simple act of faith on their part, the blood had been struck on the door posts.

Exodus 12:7 - *And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.*

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

2. HIS WORD TO ME MAKES ME SURE.

The family dwelling in a home in Egypt which was sheltered by the blood would have had absolute assurance that all would be well because God had said,

Exodus 12:13 -*when I see the blood, I will pass over you.....*

It was not presumption on their part to know that all would be well. They were simply resting back in calm assurance upon the promise of God.

It would have been a great presumption had they doubted the word that God had spoken!

The blood of Christ makes us safe. The Word of God makes us sure. We may be absolutely sure of our salvation because we have God's word, which cannot be broken, in which to trust. For example -

John 3:16 - *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

John 3:36 - *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*

John 5:24 - *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*

John 10:9 - *I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.*

Romans 10:9 - *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*

1 John 5:11-12 - *And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.*

12 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

Which is the greater presumption - to believe what God says, or to doubt what God says?

3. HIS WITNESS IN ME MAKES ME SURE.

This witness is twofold.

a. There is the witness of the Holy Spirit.

The moment we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and accept Him as our own personal Saviour, the Holy Spirit enters our hearts to abide there forever.

Romans 8:16 - *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:*

Galatians 4:6 - *And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.*

1 John 4:13 - *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.*

How wonderful is this inward assurance of the Holy Spirit!

*If one should ask of me, how can I tell?
Glory to Jesus, I know very well!
God's Holy Spirit with mine doth agree,
Constantly witnessing - Jesus loves me.*

b. There is the witness of a changed life.

2 Corinthians 5:17 - *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

Compare with -

John 9:25 - *He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.*

When we find that the things we used to hate we now love, and the things we used to love we now hate, we can be quite sure that the miracle of regeneration has taken place.

Are you saved?

If so, be sure of it!

If not, make sure by receiving the Lord Jesus as your own personal Saviour now.

John 1:12 - *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:*

CONFESSING THE LORD BEFORE OTHERS

STUDY 2

Scripture Portion: Romans 10:1-17

There must be very many true, real Christians who love the Lord Jesus and desire to honour Him, who nevertheless fail to experience fulness of blessing in the Christian life.

Why is this? One reason is because they are not confessing their Saviour and Lord, or because they are only partially confessing Him.

For example, they confess Him by life and not by lip, at home but not in the office, before other Christians but not before the world. How easy it is to be like Joseph of Arimathaea - *a disciple of Jesus, but secretly.....!*

John 19:38 - *And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus.*

John 7:13 - *Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews.*

John 12:42 - *Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue:*

Proverbs 29:25 - *The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.*

Are you a secret disciple?

The key verse of this study is -

Matthew 10:32-33 - *Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.*

33 But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

It is important to notice that these are the words of the Lord Jesus. What a wonderful

promise is **verse 32**, but it places a responsibility upon us. Surely we should count it the greatest possible privilege to confess Him, our Saviour, Friend and Lord, before men?

Notice, we are not to confess ourselves, our particular church, our denominational link, or simply *the Almighty*. We are to confess the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 10:9 - *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*

1 Corinthians 12:3 - *Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.*

To confess the Lord Jesus before others means:

To profess faith in Him as my own personal Saviour and Lord, and openly to identify myself with Him, as a believer in Him, as His disciple and His servant.

2. WHY SHOULD WE CONFESS THE LORD JESUS BEFORE OTHERS?

a. The Plan of Salvation includes open confession.

This is made very clear from -

Romans 10:9-10 - *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.
10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

Confession is the evidence of true heart belief. When one really believes and receives the Lord Jesus, then open confession of Him and of one's faith in Him must and will follow. In God's plan of salvation, confession with the mouth is linked with believing in the heart.

John 1:12 - *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.*

b. The Lord of the Harvest expects open confession.

The spread of the gospel depends, not upon ministers, evangelists, missionaries, etc., but upon the individual believer, and every believer openly confessing Christ. This is the divine plan for world evangelization as we learn from -

Acts 8:1 - *And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.*

Notice the words *except the apostles* and compare -

Acts 8:4 - *Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.*

c. The Day of Judgment requires open confession.

Study carefully **Matthew 10:32-33** - *Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.*

33 *But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.*

If we would be confessed by Him before the Father, we must, by His grace, confess Him before men. This is solemn, but, as we have noticed, these are the words of the Lord Jesus Himself.

d. The Sacrifice of Calvary demands open confession.

He loved us so much that He was willing to go to the cross of Calvary for us - *bearing the shame and scoffing rude* - and in order that He might bear *our sins in His own body on the tree*.

1 Peter 2:24 - *Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.*

He died openly for us. Are we content, and can we live, secretly for Him? He was not ashamed of us. Are we ashamed of Him?

Hebrews 2:11 - *For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.*

e. The example of Jesus evokes open confession.

1 Timothy. 6:13 - *I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;*

We are told here that the Lord Jesus witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate. His whole life was a declaration of His Person and of what He had come to do. We are His disciples. It is our highest privilege and our responsibility to identify ourselves with Him openly.

Luke 6:40 - *The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.*

2. HOW SHOULD WE CONFESS THE LORD JESUS BEFORE OTHERS?

1. Every Christian should start the Christian life by a definite open confession of the Lord Jesus before others.

Immediately after believing there should be a definite open confession of faith in Christ.

This should be by word of mouth-

Matthew 10:32 - *Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.*

Mark 5:19 - *Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.*

Romans 10:9-10 - *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

By taking an open stand on the Lord's side -

Exodus 32:26 - *Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.*

By a changed life -

John 9:11 - *He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight.*

Acts 4:14 - *And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.*

b. Every Christian should constantly confess the Lord Jesus before others by word of mouth.

That is to say, Christians should not only confess the Lord Jesus at the start of the Christian life, but they should go on doing so.

Acts 1:8 - *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

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

Acts 8:4 - *Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.*

Here the word *preaching* means *gossiping*.

Alas, how often we are ashamed of Him! How unworthy and how sinful is our silence!

Many who worship false gods and who are caught up in false systems of religion are ready at all times to speak of their *faith*, and what a challenge this is to those of us who know the true God.

John 17:3 - *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

2. Every Christian should confess the Lord Jesus before others by baptism. This is a New Testament emphasis.

In the **Acts**, all who believed were baptized. Look up the following references. Notice that, in every case, belief was followed by baptism and baptism was only administered after believing.

Acts 2:38 - *Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*

Acts 2:41 - *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.*

Acts 8:12 - *But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.*

Acts. 8:35-39 - *Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.*

36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

Acts 9:17-18 - *And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.*

18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

Acts 10:45 - *And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.*

Acts 10:48 - *And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.*

Acts 16:14-15 - *And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she*

attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

Acts 16:30-34 - *And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*

31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

35 And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go.

Acts 18:8 - *And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.*

d. Every Christian should confess the Lord Jesus before others by a quiet, consistent Christian life. That is, by what we are and by what we do, by what we are not and by the things we do not do.

The most powerful confession of Christ and testimony for Him is that of a true, Spirit-filled life - in the home, office, factory, shop, hospital - at work and at play!

Matthew 5:16 - *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

Notice the words *so* and *see*.

1 Peter 3:1-4 - *Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;*

2 While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.

3 Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;

4 But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

3. Every Christian should confess the Lord Jesus before others by definite association with God's people in worship and in service.

Hebrews 10:25 - *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

The very fact of going to church is a confession of Christ before men. There are dozens of ways of serving Him and thus of confessing Him.

What is our enabling?

1 Corinthians 12:3 - *Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.*

EVERY CHRISTIAN'S GREATEST NEED

STUDY 3

Scripture Portions: John 14:15-18, 25-26; 16:1-15

Every Christian's greatest need is to enter in to the secret of a victorious life and of power in service. What is this secret? It is found in -

Ephesians 5:18 - *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;*

When we become Christians, when we are born again, we receive the Holy Spirit.

John 3:3-8 - *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

4 *Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?*

5 *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

6 *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

7 *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*

8 *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

Romans 8:9 - *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit .

1 Corinthians 3:16 - *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*

1 Corinthians 6:19 - *What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?*

2 Corinthians 6:16 - *And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them;*

and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

We are baptized with the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:13 - *For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*

We are sealed with the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 4:30 - *And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*

But, having *received* the Holy Spirit, our need is to be *filled* with the Holy Spirit.

Carefully consider the following references in -

Acts 2:4 - *And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

Acts 4:8 - *Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel,*

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

Acts 6:3 - *Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.*

Acts 7:55 - *But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,*

Acts 9:17 - *And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.*

Acts 11:23-24 - *Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.
24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people*

was added unto the Lord.

Acts 13:9 - *Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him,*

There are so many angles from which we can approach this study. Here are five progressive truths about the Spirit-filled life.

3. To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be possessed, controlled and dominated by the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps you will have wondered why in -

Ephesians 5:18 - *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;*

the apostle Paul contrasts drunkenness with being filled with the Spirit with God's greatest and holiest provision? The Ephesians would not be in any doubt as to what Paul had in his mind. It was a pagan belief that God dwelt in the blood of the grape. Therefore, the more wine a man drank and the more he became possessed or intoxicated with that wine, the more he would become possessed of his god.

Paul is therefore telling the Ephesians that, whereas at one time, they thought that by becoming drunk, they were becoming god-possessed, now they must become intoxicated and become truly God-possessed - Spirit-filled. They were not to be filled with the wine from some earthly vineyard, but they were to be filled with the Holy Spirit Who had been sent from heaven.

Acts 2:4 - *And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

To be filled with the Holy Spirit, then, means to give Him full control of our lives. It means that the human personality becomes controlled by the divine personality.

In the following scriptures, we have examples of the use of the word ***filled***. You will see that the word ***filled*** means to ***grip, possess, control***.

Luke 5:26 - *And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to day.*

John 2:7 - *Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.*

John 16:6 - *But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.*

Acts 5:3 - *But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?*

Ephesians 3:19 - *And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.*

The divine personality does not obliterate the human personality, rather, He possesses, controls and energizes it that it may fully function to His glory. To be filled with the Holy Spirit, then, means that He takes full possession of -

our body -

Romans 6:13 - *Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*

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

our mind -

Philippians 2:5 - *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:*

and our spirit -

1 Thessalonians 5:23 - *And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

2. To be filled with the Holy Spirit is God's provision for

every Christian from the moment of conversion.

Many new converts do not realize this and do not enter into a life of the Holy Spirit's fullness at the time of their conversion. In some cases, due to lack of instruction, they never understand or enjoy this wonderful provision which God has made for every one of His children.

Think of this. The Christian is a reincarnation of Christ. He is one in whom the life of the risen Lord Jesus Christ is being reproduced. How is His life reproduced in us? By the Holy Spirit. His desire for us is not simply life, but abundance, fullness of life.

John 10:10 - *The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*

The way to experience **John 10:10** is by -

Ephesians 5:18 - *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;*

We look upon the Spirit-filled life as the abnormal life meant only for a few of God's children. God's plan is that it should be the normal life of every one of His children. It is not a luxury. It is not optional. It is a necessity. Therefore, God presents it to us in the terms of a command.

Ephesians 5:18 - *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;*

4. To be filled with the Holy Spirit is the secret of victorious living and fruitful service.

Will you pause and do a little honest, heart-searching before the Lord? What is the reason for all the weakness, fruitlessness, faithlessness and failure in our spiritual experience? Why are our lives so much less than we expected them to be and that God desires them to be? Why is so much of our service ineffective and productive of so little fruit?

There is only one answer: we are not filled with the Holy Spirit.

4. To be filled with the Holy Spirit is not a once-and-for-all experience never to be repeated.

It is important for us to be clear about this in order that disappointment and defeat may be avoided. There is an initial infilling with the Holy Spirit, which may take place at conversion but which often takes place subsequently to conversion. But this infilling of the Holy Spirit must be constantly repeated.

Some of the same disciples who were filled with the Holy Spirit in -

Acts 2:4 - *And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

were again filled with the Holy Spirit in -

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

The tense of **Ephesians 5:18** is present continuous. The literal rendering of the last part of this verse is, *be ye being filled with the Spirit.*

We may grieve the Holy Spirit and lose, not His presence, but His infilling.

Ephesians 4:30 - *And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*

When this happens, we need to be filled again.

5. To be filled with the Holy Spirit requires the fulfilling of certain definite conditions.

There must be **REALITY**, sincerity, earnestness, seriousness.

b. **REPENTANCE** comes next. This includes confession,

turning from all known sin, and cleansing.

Proverbs 28:13 - *He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.*

1 John 1:9 - *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

4. *RESTITUTION* may be necessary. So far as it is within our power, wrongs must be put to right.

Luke 19:8 - *And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.*

- d. There must be a definite **RECEPTION** of the Holy Spirit, not of His presence, for if we are Christians, He is already within us, indwelling us, but of His infilling, to possess us. We may ask for this infilling.

Luke 11:13 - *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*

5. *RELIANCE*. Having asked that God will graciously fill us with His Spirit, we must dare to believe that our prayer is not only heard, but answered.

1 John 5:14-15 - *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:*

15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

*Make us in Thy royal palace,
Vessels worthy for the King;
From Thy fulness fill our chalice
From Thy never-failing spring.*

THE KIND OF CHURCH TO JOIN

STUDY 4

Scripture Portions: Acts 2:41-47; Hebrews 10:19-25

There are very many true believers who, for one reason or another, do not link up with any church or assembly. The loss to themselves is very great quite apart from the loss which others experience. Some of God's children have good and genuine reasons for not joining a church. Others have reasons that are not good, in fact, are unworthy.

Some Christians experience a genuine difficulty in finding a God-honouring ministry - a Bible church with which to join. Can a truly born again person join a modernistic church or a worldly church?

2 Corinthians 6:14-18 - *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*

15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

Some Christians, due to the kind of work in which they are engaged, are prevented from regularity of worship. Therefore, they do not join a church. But it would be a great blessing to them to find a spiritual home.

Again, some Christians feel they are not good enough to join a church. The church, however, is meant for sinners - saved sinners. If entrance to the church was only given to those who felt good enough, no one would join!

Then, of course, there are those who feel that no church is good enough for them! This is a most obnoxious form of spiritual pride. You will never be a member of a perfect church, anyway, because, having joined, you will be there yourself!

There are some Christians who, at one time, belonged to a church, but through some unfortunate experience, they have severed their connection. There are a great many who

do not want to assume any responsibility with regard to Christian service or giving. But - failure to join a church for this reason is unworthy.

It is important to make clear the difference between **the Church** and **a church**. *The Church* is that great invisible, universal living organism consisting of every born again person.

Ephesians 1:22-23 - *And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,
23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.*

A **church** is the visible, local assembly of people who call themselves Christians.

Romans 16:5 - *Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my wellbeloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.*

1 Corinthians 1:2 - *Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:*

1 Corinthians 16:19 - *The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.*

Galatians 1:2 - *And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia:*

Colossians 4:15 - *Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.*

1 Thessalonians 1:1 - *Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Revelation 1:11 - *Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.*

Every believer belongs to *the Church*, even if he does not belong to *a church*. Everyone who belongs to *the Church* should link up with *a church*.

Acts 2:47 - *Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*

Here are some suggestions as to the kind of church to join.

6. A church where there is found a true spirit of Christian worship and fellowship and a sphere for Christian service.

These are our three great needs:

6. worship -

John 4:23-24 - *But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. 24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*

7. fellowship -

Malachi 3:16 - *Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.*

Hebrews 10:25 - *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

c. service -

1 Thessalonians 1:9 - *For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;*

Seek out an assembly of God's people where you feel *at home* in worshiping the Lord, in fellowship with His people and in service for Him.

2. A church where membership is not made too easy.

Not, of course, that there should ever be an exclusive spirit in a church. On the other hand, you will wish to join a church where the minister and the members require to know that you -

8. are really born again -

John 3:5 - *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

9. are seeking, by the grace of God, to live a consistent Christian life -

Ephesians 5:15 - *See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,*

God is glorified when a church sets a high standard for membership.

7. A church which makes much of the Bible and stands wholeheartedly for the whole counsel of God.

We are living in days of apostasy -

2 Timothy 3:1 - *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.*

Jude 4 - *For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.*

days when there is a great departure from the truth. The true Christian, therefore, will desire to join a church which stands for the full inspiration and authority of the whole Bible.

2 Timothy 3:16 - *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:*

2 Peter 1:21 - *For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

A church which honours the Person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ -

10. His full deity.

John 20:28 - *And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.*

b. *His perfect humanity.*

1 Timothy 2:5 - *For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;*

11. His virgin birth.

Matthew 1:18 - *Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.*

d. *the infallibility of His teaching.*

John 5:22-23 - *For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:*

23 That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.

12. the reality of His miracles.

John 20:30-31 - *And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:*

31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

f. *the substitutionary nature of His death.*

Isaiah 53:5 - *But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*

2 Corinthians 5:21 - *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

13. His bodily resurrection.

John 20: 27 - *Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.*

h. His glorious ascension.

Luke 24:50-51 - *And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.*

51 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

1. His present exaltation.

Acts 5:31 - *Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.*

14. and His second advent.

Acts 1:9-11 - *And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.*

10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

Avoid being a heresy hunter. But, whatever you do, do not join any church which does not stand for and proclaim the whole counsel of God.

Acts 20:27 - *For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.*

8. A church which is separate from all secular, secondary and worldly methods, movements and organizations which are disloyal to the Bible.

It is not the business of a church to run a big social program in which place is given, time is spent and money is expended on worldly entertainments. None of these come within the scope of the work of the church. Read the Book of **Acts** and see for yourself. The program of the church must be, in every respect, honouring to the Holy Spirit.

Acts 15:28 - *For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;*

5. A church which emphasizes the ministry of the Holy Ghost and the vital power of prayer.

Acts 9:31 - *Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.*

gives us a picture of a model church. Wherever a church emphasizes the need for prayer, you can be certain that that church is out to honour the Holy Ghost. That is the kind of church to join - the prayer meeting church! Compare -

Acts 1:13-14 - *And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.*

14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

Acts. 3:1 - *Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.*

Acts 4:23-31 - *And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.*

24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:

25 Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?

26 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.

27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by

the name of thy holy child Jesus.

31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

Acts 12:5 - *Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.*

9. A church which is not only evangelical but evangelistic.

That is, a church which is not only sound (because you can be sound yet sound asleep) but sound in belief and at the same time reaching out in its ministry to those who are lost. We must not only hold **fast** the faithful Word -

Titus 1:9 - *Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.*

but we must hold **forth** the Word of life -

Philippians 2:16 - *Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.*

Some churches are evangelically sound, but they are evangelistically dead.

10. A church which is Christ-centered and not denominationally-centered or ecumenically-associated.

To join a church will mean linking up with one denomination or another, or one assembly or another. But, remember, it is the local assembly of God's people with whom you are linking up. In that assembly there must never be an over-emphasis on denominationalism, which only leads to the **I am of Paul** or **I am of Apollos** spirit.

1 Corinthians 3:4-7 - *For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?*

5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?

6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that

giveth the increase.

This is carnal, sectarian and sad in the extreme.

On the matter of ecumenism, true believers have this already. It does not need to be organized or *joined*.

Galatians 3:27-28 - *For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

There is an organized ecumenism which must, at all costs, be avoided and denounced.

2 Corinthians 6:14-17 - *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*

15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

Jude 3 - *Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*

When you come to think of it, the kind of church which we have outlined above is only a New Testament church after al

THE SUPREME IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

STUDY 5

Scripture Portions: Luke 11:1-13; 18:1-8

To be a born again soul, prayer is as essential as breathing. To neglect it must result in weakness and defeat. It is not only important that Christians should pray, but it is of supreme importance. This fact makes our present study one to which we should give special heed. Christians need instruction about prayer: its meaning, its promises, its method and its value.

Luke 11:1 -*And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.*

How wonderful to be taught to pray by John. How much more wonderful to be taught by the Lord Jesus!.

Romans 8:26-27 - *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*

27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

What is prayer? C. H. Spurgeon said that, ***The heart of prayer is the prayer of the heart.*** It does not consist simply of words, gestures, forms or eloquence. ***Prayer is the address of a poor creature on earth to a great Creator and loving Father in Heaven.***

Ponder this simple definition: it reveals the supreme wonder of prayer that a poor sinful being can commune with the high and lofty One.

Isaiah 57:15 - *For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.*

*Prayer is the simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try;
Prayer, the sublimest strains that reach*

The Majesty on high.

11. THE SUPREME IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER IN THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN.

15. Prayer is of supreme importance in the life of the Christian because of the importance it is given in the Word of God.

The Bible is full of the subject of prayer. Imagine what a mutilated book we should have if every reference to prayer were taken out of it.

The fact of the emphasis on this subject of prayer which is made in the Word of God indicates to us the supreme importance placed upon it by the Holy Spirit Who is the Author of the book.

2 Timothy 3:16 - *But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.*

2 Peter 1:21 - *For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

16. Prayer is of supreme importance in the life of the Christian because of the teaching of our Lord.

Here again, imagine the four Gospels with every reference to prayer cut out of them. How mutilated the books would be! Over and over again our blessed Lord stressed the importance of prayer, gave wonderful promises in relation to prayer and encouraged His disciples (and us) to pray.

Matthew 18:19 - *Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.*

Matthew 21:22 - *And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.*

Mark 9:23 - *Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.*

Mark 11:24 - *Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.*

John 14:13-14 - *And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*

14 *If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.*

He, in fact, is our great example in prayer.

Luke 3:21 - *Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened,*

Luke 5:16 - *And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.*

Luke 6:12 - *And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.*

Luke 9:18 - *And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him: and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am?*

Luke 9:28 - *And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.*

Luke 11:1 - *And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.*

Luke 22:41-42 - *And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed,*
42 *Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.*

17. Prayer is of supreme importance in the life of the Christian because it is the first instinct of the new life.

Just as the first instinct of a newly-born babe is to cry, and in so doing to use its lungs, so the first instinct of the newly-converted soul is to cry.

Romans 8:15 - *For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*

Notice the illustration of this simple truth in -

Acts 9:11 - *And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,*

where we read of Saul, immediately after his vision of the ascended Lord, praying.

- d. Prayer is of supreme importance in the life of the Christian because it is the Christian's vital breath and native air.**

The Christian life is a new life - His life, the life of the risen Lord Jesus implanted in us by the Holy Spirit.

1 John 5:13-14 - *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*

14 *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:* This new life can only be sustained by prayer, and only by prayer can we develop into robust, healthy Christians. Without prayer we shall be anaemic, lifeless and ineffective. This means that we should pray -

privately -

Matthew 6:6 - *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy*

closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

frequently -

Psalm 55:17 - *Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.*

regularly -

Daniel 6:10 - *Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.*

in times of trouble -

Psalm 50:15 - *And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.*

in fact, without ceasing -

1 Thessalonians 5:17 - *Pray without ceasing.*

18. Prayer is of supreme importance in the life of the Christian because it is such a glorious privilege to pray.

The Christian life is full of privileges, but can you imagine any greater privilege than to enter into the holiest of all, into the throne room of the King, and to bow in humble worship at His feet, to speak with Him face to face and as friend with friend? How great is this privilege!

Hebrews 4:14-16 - *Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.*

15 *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*

16 *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

Hebrews 10:19-22 - *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,
20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;
21 And having an high priest over the house of God;
22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*

19. Prayer is of supreme importance in the life of the Christian because of all it can accomplish in supplying every need.

It is perfectly true that *more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.* But think of the wonderful accounts of the power of prayer which have been recorded for us in the Word of God. How many can you enumerate?

In the light of these, is it not amazing that we do not pray more? For the believer, prayer is the divine method for supplying every need.

Philippians 4:19 - *But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

The reason we have not, is because we ask not.

James 4:2 - *Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.*

If only we would ask, we would receive.

Luke 11:9-10 - *And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*

10 *For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*

What is it you need? Money? A house? Food? Employment?
The salvation of some loved one? Then ask!

20. Prayer is of supreme importance in the life
of the Christian because only through prayer can
God's's will be accomplished.

His working depends upon our asking.

James 5:17 - *Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.*

He waits to be enquired of.

Ezekiel 36:37 - *Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock.*

He has ordained it thus.

The purpose of prayer is not to make God alter His will, but to provide Him with a channel through which He may accomplish His will.

12. THE SUPREME IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER IN THE LIFE OF
THE CHURCH.

It is only necessary to read the Book of **Acts**, which contains the inspired history of the early Church, to become convinced that the ministry of prayer was foremost in the life and the service of the Church.

The Church was born in a prayer meeting as we discover by comparing -

Acts 1:13-14 - *And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.*

14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

Acts 2:1-4 - *And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one*

accord in one place.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

These early believers also attended the regular prayer meetings in the temple.

Acts 3:1 - *Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.*

Moreover, in times of special testings, they held special times of prayer.

Acts 4:23-31 - *And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.*

24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:

25 Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?

26 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.

27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

Acts 12:1 - *Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church.*

Acts 12:5 - *Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.*

Acts 12:17 - *But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go show these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.*

Acts 16:25 - *And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.*

They believed that prayer was a priority matter.

Acts 13:1-4 - *Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.*

2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

Yes, and when they bade one another farewell, they prayed.

Acts 20:36 - *And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all.*

Years ago, Dr. Reuben Archer Torrey said:

Prayer is the key that unlocks all the storehouses of God's infinite grace and power. All that God is, all that God has, is at the disposal of the pray-er. But we must use the key. Prayer can do anything that God can do, and as God can do anything, prayer is omnipotent.

May we prove it in our lives and in the life of the Church.

THE WONDER OF GOD'S GUIDANCE

STUDY 6

Scripture Portion: Psalm 25:1-22

Over and over again we find the subject of God's guidance brought before us in the Word of God.

In the Old and New Testaments we have wonderful promises of guidance and examples of those who sought and found the Lord's will for their lives. We also have a number of very clear statements which show us our need of guidance.

For example -

Jeremiah 10:23 - *O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.*

In the psalm which we have chosen for the scripture reading in connection with this study, you will notice that the psalmist assumes the need for guidance. Of course, not one of us would question the fact that God's people do need guiding. They need to pray. *Shew me Thy ways.....Lead me.....Guide me.....*

Psalm 25:4-5 - *Show me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths.
5 Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.*

Psalm 25:9 - *The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.*

For examples of God's guidance in the lives of His people we think -

of Abraham going out of his native country not knowing where he was going, being wholly dependent upon the guidance of God.

Genesis 12:1 - *Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee:*

of Moses and the children of Israel being led by the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night.

Exodus 13:21-22 - *And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: 22 He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.*

and of Joshua -

Joshua 1:6-9 - *Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swore unto their fathers to give them.*

7 Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

9 Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

In the New Testament, one of the most striking examples is that of Philip, who was guided of the Lord to leave Samaria and to win the eunuch to Christ.

Acts 8:5 - *Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.*

Acts 8:26 - *And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.*

These examples, and many others of which we can read, establish the fact that God does guide His people.

Let us think of the Nature of God's guidance and of the Method of God's guidance.

13. THE NATURE OF GOD'S GUIDANCE.

21. God's guidance is DIVINE guidance.

We need to stress this in order to emphasize its quality. There can be no possibility of a

mistake in the guidance which God gives His children. The secret of divine guidance is the Guide.

Psalm 16:11 - *Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.*

22. It is CLEAR guidance.

The psalmist prayed to be led in a plain path.

Psalm 27:11 - *Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.*

The Lord's promise to us is -

Proverbs 3:6 - *In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*

Isaiah 35:8 - *And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.*

The Lord is always more anxious than we are that we should be absolutely clear as to His will.

Psalm 25:12 - *What man is he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose.*

c. *God's guidance is CONTINUAL guidance.*

Psalm 48:14 - *For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.*

Psalm 73:24 - *Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.*

Isaiah 58:11 - *And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.*

His guidance is for the whole life, until the Lord comes or we go to be with Him.

23. It is GRADUAL guidance.

Psalm 37:23 - *The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.*

A step at a time and a stop at a time. A moment by moment experience of His leading of which we may be conscious, but of which are more often unconscious.

e. His guidance is sometimes STRANGE to us.

An example of this is found in -

Exodus 13:18 - *But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt.*

The natural caravan route was along the sea coast to Gaza, a comparatively short distance. By way of Sinai the route was very much longer.

God led His children by the long way round. He often does this for our discipline and training.

God's greatest concern for you and for me is the moulding of our character.

Deuteronomy 8:2-3 - *And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.*

3 And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.

24. It is INDIVIDUAL guidance.

It does not come to two people alike. He guided the wise men by a star, but we have no record of His guiding anyone else in this way.

He has a specific purpose for each one of His children. Therefore, His guidance is adapted to each individual need.

Acts 9:6 - *And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what*

thou must do.

g. It is *COMPREHENSIVE* guidance.

That is, He is willing to guide us concerning every detail, great and small, which has to do with our life down here. No matter is too small, and certainly no matter is too great, for us to bring to Him in order that we may know His will concerning it.

Ephesians 5:17 - *Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.*

How wonderful it is that God condescends to guide His children! How frequently we must have missed His guidance! How earnestly He desires us to travel in the pathway of His choosing!

What is the Method by which He guides us?

14. THE METHOD OF GOD'S GUIDANCE.

25. First, by His WORD.

The Bible is our chart and compass, our guide book for the whole of our earthly pilgrimage until at last we are received into glory.

Psalms 73:24 - *Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.*

It is a lamp and a light.

Psalms 119:105 - *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*

Through His Word the Lord guides us.

(1) By clear direction. For example -

Should a Christian marry an unbeliever? We have the clear answer to this in -

2 Corinthians 6:14 - *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*

(2) By general principles.

There are some matters concerning which the Word of God has nothing specific in the form of any clear direction to say about these things. But, there are very clear principles laid down which show us how the Lord would have us act.

John 7:17 - *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.*

(3) By warning us of false ways.

All the way through the Bible there are warning notes to which we must, at all costs, give heed - and remember. He will never guide us to take any step which is contrary to His Word.

26. He guides us by His SPIRIT.

Have a careful look at -

Nehemiah 9:19-20 - *Yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to show them light, and the way wherein they should go.*

20 Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst.

How wonderfully God guides us by His Holy Spirit.

John 16:13 - *Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come.*

Sometimes by constraining us -

Acts 10:19-20 - *While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.*

20 Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.

At other times by restraining us -

Acts 16:7 - *After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.*

By an inward urge which may be difficult to describe but which is unmistakable when it is experienced!

c. *He guides us by His EYE.*

We learn this from -

Psalm 32:8 - *I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.*

In the olden days the host at a feast would sit at the head of the table entertaining his guests.

His servants would stand nearby, watching his every movement and the host would direct them with his eye.

How necessary it is to keep looking unto Him if we are to receive His guidance!

Hebrews 12:2 - *Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

27. He guides us by His SERVANTS.

He guides us by the wise counsel of trusted friends.

Proverbs 11:14 - *Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.*

There are times when it is helpful to confer with flesh and blood.

Galatians 1:16 - *To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:*

e. He guides us by His PROVIDENCES.

Suddenly He sets before us an open door.

Revelation 3:8 - *I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.*

Or we hear a voice behind us.

Isaiah 30:21 - *And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.*

Notice two concluding things.

- (1) **If God guides us in the five ways mentioned above, we must -**
 - (a) be familiar with His Word.
 - (b) live in subjection to His Spirit.
 - (c) keep our eyes upon Him.
 - (d) cultivate the right kind of friends.
 - (e) watch for His providential workings.
- (2) **We may be sure of God's guidance when each of these five lines along which He guides harmonize and point in the same direction.**

A LESSON IN STEWARDSHIP

STUDY 7

Scripture Portion: 2 Corinthians, Chapters 8 and 9

The key verses for this study are -

Proverbs 3:9-10 - *Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:*

10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.

In these verses we find a precept and a promise placed side by side. As Christians, we are to honour the Lord. That is, we are to give Him the first place, not only in our hearts, homes and businesses, but with regard to our money.

Matthew 6:33 - *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

We belong to the Lord by creation -

Ezekiel 18:4 - *Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.*

and by redemption -

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 - *What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?*

20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

In like manner, all that we possess belongs to Him.

Deuteronomy 8:18 - *But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day.*

1 Chronicles 29:11-14 - *Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all.*

12 Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all.

13 Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name.

14 But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.

Hosea 2:8 - *For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal.*

1 Corinthians 4:7 - *For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?*

So, strictly speaking, it is wrong to speak of our possession as **ours** or **mine**. If we belong to Him, all our possessions belong to Him.

It is very significant that the converts at Pentecost were not only added to the church and were baptized, they did not only continue in prayers and in breaking of bread, etc., but the question of their money came under vital consideration.

Acts 2:44-45 - *And all that believed were together, and had all things common; 45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.*

True conversion should touch not only the heart but the pocket. Yet there must be many Christians who are not surrendered to the Lord on the money question. They are robbing God -

Malachi 3:8-11 - *Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.*

9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.

Consequently, they are poor spiritually, and, in some measure, temporally too, for God always blesses the liberal soul.

Proverbs 11: 25 - *The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.*

Here are two simple propositions upon which we shall base our consideration of this theme.

FIRST PROPOSITION:

The Bible teaches that every Christian should give a fixed portion of his or her income to the Lord. This should be done as a first claim, regularly, systematically, proportionately and thankfully.

SECOND PROPOSITION:

The Bible also teaches that, where Christians thus honour the Lord with their substance, the Lord prospers them both spiritually and temporally because they have thus honoured Him.

15. Let us consider the first proposition stage by stage.

28. This is something the Bible teaches.

We are not outlining man's method or idea. As far back as -

Genesis 14:20 - *And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.*

Genesis 28:22 - *And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.*

we read of Abraham and of Jacob honouring the Lord with their substance. We know that God was pleased with their action.

God commanded the Jew to tithe -

Leviticus 27:30 - *And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD'S: it is holy unto the LORD.*

In many references in the Word of God, it is made quite clear that it is God's will that every one of His children should give back to Him a fixed portion of his or her income,

to be used as He directs and for His glory.

Deuteronomy 26:12 - *When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled;*

Proverbs 3:9 - *Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:*

Malachi 3:8-11 - *Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.*

9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.

1 Corinthians 16:2 - *Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.*

Read also **2 Corinthians 8:1-15; 2 Corinthians 9:1-15; and Philippians 4:10-20.**

29. This matter touches every Christian.

It does not refer to just a few Christians, but to all Christians.

Notice the first two words in -

2 Corinthians 9:7 - *Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*

The rich man is to give of his substance to the Lord, and the poor widow can also give of her substance.

Mark 12:42 - *And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.*

c. *We should give a fixed portion of our income.*

1 Corinthians 16:2 - *Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.*

We may decide to give one-twentieth, one-tenth, one-fifth or one-half. The portion we give should be out of all our income, that is, all that we receive, which includes our regular salary or wage, bonuses, special gifts, etc.

30. Our giving is to the Lord.

This is important. Primarily, we do not give to His people or to His work, but to Him. The channel through which we give to Him may be our local church or assembly or a missionary society. But once we realize that our giving is to Him, then our giving will be sanctified and each act of giving will become an act of worship. Our giving will also become sacrificial.

2 Samuel 24:24 - *And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.*

e. *All this is to be done regularly.*

Think what it would mean if every Christian obeyed -

1 Corinthians 16:2 - *Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.*

There would be no lack of funds in church work, for the training of missionary candidates, for the supply of copies of the Word of God for free distribution, or for the support of foreign missions, etc.

31. Systematically.

God wants us to be practical in our giving. It is a good plan to keep a purse, a box or a bag into which the Lord's portion may be regularly placed; or a banking account can be opened and, at regular intervals, amounts may be placed into this to be used specifically for His work.

Here is a suggestion. Buy a small cash book. On one side of the page, record all that you receive. On the other side record all that is given to the Lord's work. In this way it will be easy to see whether you are giving to Him the portion that you have decided upon.

You are the Lord's steward, so be a wise, careful steward and be systematic in the matter of your giving.

1 Corinthians 4:2 - *Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.*

g. Proportionately.

That is, our giving is to be based upon our receiving. Those who receive less will give less.

1 Corinthians 16:2 - *Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.*

2 Corinthians 8:12 - *For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.*

2 Corinthians 9:7 - *Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*

You will see that a Christian is to give *as God hath prospered him.....according to the a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.....according as he purposeth in his heart.*

As to the proportion we are to give, that is a matter we must decide before the Lord.

But, the minimum that the Jew was required to give was one-tenth.

32. Thankfully.

God loves a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9:7 - *Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*

In the two chapters which give us the New Testament teaching on giving, strong motives are given for our giving.

1 Corinthians 8:9 - *But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.*

1 Corinthians 9:15 - *But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.*

16. Let us conclude by considering the second proposition.

We would expect God to bless His children spiritually in response to their giving to Him. Of course He does this, but, in addition, He promises to bless them temporally. We must never give to Him in order to get from Him. But, as we give, we shall receive. The measure of our receiving will be in proportion to our giving.

Let the following scriptures speak to you.

Proverbs 3:9-10 - *Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:*

10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.

Proverbs 11:24-25 - *There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.*

25 The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

Malachi 3:10-11 - *Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.*

11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.

Matthew 6:33 - *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

Luke 6:38 - *Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.*

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 - *But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.*

7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

WINNING THE LOST TO THE SAVIOUR

STUDY 8

Scripture Portion: Acts 8:1-8 and 26-40

The title of this study was not chosen at random. You will notice that it contains three very important words. It is around these three words that we shall introduce the three divisions of our theme.

We shall consider the great matter of soul-winning, its importance and the responsibility of every Christian to be a soul-winner, and the methods we are to adopt.

17. First of all, let us think of the SAVIOUR.

Of all the names given to our blessed Lord, surely this is the most precious. It was even by divine announcement -

Matthew 1:21 - *And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.*

Mary, the mother of Jesus, spoke of the One who was to come as *my Saviour* -

Luke 1:47 - *And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.*

Our Lord Jesus Himself made it perfectly clear that the primary purpose of His advent, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension was the salvation of men and women.

Let us be absolutely sure about the fact that the one supreme purpose of His coming from heaven to earth was to save the lost.

Luke 19:10 - *For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

1 Timothy 1:15 - *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.*

Hebrews 7:25 - *Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*

He did not come primarily to be our teacher, our reformer or our example - or even to be our king. He came to win lost sinners to Himself - to save the lost.

In the Gospels, we have vivid pictures of Him doing this work. For nineteen hundred years, He has not ceased to do it.

33. He is the UNIVERSAL Saviour.

That is, He is the Saviour of all men.

John 1:29 - *The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*

John 3:16 - *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

John 10:9 - *I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.*

John 10:16 - *And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.*

Romans 10:12-13 - *For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.*

13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

34. He is the ONLY Saviour.

That is, there is none other.

Isaiah 45:22 - *Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.*

John 10:9 - *I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.*

John 14:6 - *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

Acts 4:12 - *Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*

c. *He is the PERFECT Saviour.*

That is, no case is too hard for Him.

Hebrews 7:25 - *Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*

18. Now let us think of the word *LOST*.

Why was it necessary for the Saviour to come? Because, apart from Him, all men are lost. This solemn word *lost* describes the deep spiritual need of mankind, the need of everyone everywhere who has never been saved by Jesus Christ. It is our Lord's description.

In **Luke, chapter 15**, the sheep was lost, the silver was lost, and the son was lost. Look up and compare with -

Matthew 18:11 - *For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.*

To be lost is to be perishing -

John 3:16 - *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

Under condemnation -

John 3:18 - *He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

Under the wrath of God -

John 3:36 - *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*

Spiritually dead -

Ephesians 2:1 - *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins:*

Bound for a Christ-less eternity -

Matthew 13:49-50 - *So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, 50 And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*

How great and how urgent is the need of every lost one!

19. Finally, let us think of the word *WINNING*.

The supreme passion in the heart of the Saviour is the winning of the lost. The supreme need of every lost soul is to be won to the Saviour.

Now notice this: the winning of the lost to the Saviour is to be the supreme business of every Christian.

Notice, the supreme business of every Christian.

Matthew 28:19-20 - *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

Mark 1:17 - *And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.*

Acts 1:8 - *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and*

ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Notice that all these references apply to each one of us just as much as to those who originally heard these words.

Every Christian is to be a soul-winner. This is the Lord's purpose, plan and program for world evangelization.

Here are seven simple secrets for successful soul-winning.

35. Recognize that winning the lost to the Saviour is your life work.

Think this out carefully and prayerfully. Whoever you are, however young or old, whatever your circumstances, you are to be about your Father's business.

Luke 2:49 - *And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?*

John 20:21 - *Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.*

You are to be constantly following your Saviour so that He may make you a fisher of men.

b. Place yourself at the disposal of your Lord for this great work.

Get alone with Him - not once, but every day. Hear Him saying to you -

Mark 1:17 - *And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.*

In response, say to Him, *Here I am, Lord, at Your disposal. Make me a fisher of men!*

Philip was at the Lord's disposal.

When he was in the midst of a revival at Samaria and the Lord called him away to go into the desert to win the Ethiopian eunuch, he was ready to go.

Acts 8:5 - *Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.*

Read also **Acts 8:26-40**.

There is absolutely no doubt that if we are fully at the disposal of the Lord, He will use us to the salvation of others.

36. Trust the Lord to use you in His own way and time.

Look up and get the significance of -

Genesis 24:27 - *And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren.*

We may be unconscious of the fact that He is using us, or of the way in which He is using us, as in the case of Stephen.

Acts 7:58 - *And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.*

Or, we may know that He is using us, as in the case of Ananias -

Acts 9:10-17 - *And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.*

*11 And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,
12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.*

13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

16 For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

d. Ask Him to show you what to do.

We must plan to win souls -

Acts 9:6 - *And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.*

We must set out to win them, as a fisherman sets out to catch fish, as a man sets out to win a girl's affection, or as an athlete sets out to win a race.

- (1) Make a list of those whom you would win.**
- (2) Pray regularly for them.**
- (3) Seek contact with them about their need. Write to them, send a helpful book to them, take them to a service, invite them to your home, etc.**
- (4) Be interested in their interests.**
- (5) Keep on keeping on until they are won.**

37. Be prepared for the Lord to use you where you are.

It may be at home, at school, in business, in hospital, or while you are traveling.

f. Be willing to be just a link in the chain of God's purposes.

It is rarely that God uses one instrument only for the salvation of a soul. In most cases, He uses many instruments. Be willing to do your share by prayer, or conversation, or gentle persuasion.

38. Always remember that you are only an instrument in His hands.

You cannot win a soul, but He can and will do the work of winning others through you. This great work is His work.

1 Coridnthians 3:7-9 - *So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.*

8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

*Lord, lay some soul upon my heart
And love that soul through me;
Help me that I may do my part
To win that soul to Thee.*

GETTING THE MISSIONARY VISION

STUDY 9

Scripture Portion: Romans 10:1-17

In this study we are to think of the need for every Christian and for every church to become missionary-minded and missionary-hearted.

The title of our study implies that there are many Christians and churches who have little or no missionary vision.

Unfortunately, this is true. Some Christians are not very concerned for the salvation of souls here at home, and they are still less concerned for the salvation of the millions of lost souls in other lands.

Some even say that they do not believe in missionary work. Others have been heard to say that charity begins at home. Still others have been overwhelmed with the immensity of the task and have cried out, *The task is impossible!*

A few uninstructed Christians have even said, *Why interfere with the heathen? They have their own religions and we should not go and upset their culture!*

A missionary vision may be defined as: ***A blending of correct INFORMATION and Spirit-begotten INSPIRATION that leads to definite ACTION.***

Now, of course, every Christian should be a missionary, though not necessarily a foreign missionary. But, are we right in speaking of *foreign* missionaries of the *foreign* field? The Lord Jesus said, *The field is the world* -

Matthew 13:38 -*The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;*

In this study, however, we are thinking of missionary work overseas, where the need is greatest and where so many have still never heard the gospel.

How may a Christian get a missionary vision? Here are some suggestions.

OUR EYES MUST SEE.

There are certain great facts which must be clearly recognized before we can become missionary-minded and missionary-hearted.

Of these, we will mention three.

God's great redemptive purpose is for the whole of mankind.

God loves the whole world.

John 3:16 - *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

The Lord Jesus died for all men everywhere.

John 1:29 - *The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*

1 John 2:2 - *And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*

We need Peter's vision. Compare -

Acts 10:7-16 - *And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually;*

8 And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.

9 On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour:

10 And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance,

11 And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth:

12 Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.

14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.

15 And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.

16 This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

Romans 10:12-13 - *For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.*

13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

God's plan for making known the gospel is still -

Matthew 28:19 - *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:*

This commission is just as binding upon us today as it was upon the first disciples. Have you ever spent ten minutes alone with your Lord and His Word in -

Matthew 28:19 - *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:*

Romans 10:14-15 - *How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?*

15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

c. *God's plan in this dispensation is not the conversion of the world, but the evangelization of the world.*

The Holy Spirit is engaged in this age in calling out a people who will constitute the Bride.

Acts 15:14 - *Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.*

Our primary task is not to educate, civilize or even Christianize the world, but to evangelize it.

Acts 1:8 - *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

OUR MIND MUST THINK.

That, is we must become intelligently informed about three things.

39. The size and extent of the world field.

This demands a careful study of an up-to-date map of the world and, if possible, a scale showing the present population of each continent or country.

40. The relative needs of each continent and country.

For example, in England there are churches in every town and in practically every village, but if 1,000 missionaries were today to land in India, each one could have a parish all his own of over 500 villages. Yes, and in some areas of the world, the situation is even more needy!

c. What is being done.

This information can be gleaned in some measure from missionary magazines and meetings. Anyone who is available for special missionary service, or who is a missionary candidate, should do everything possible to gain as much information as possible about what is actually happening (or not happening) in the field of missionary endeavour.

OUR EARS MUST HEAR.

If our eyes are opened to see, and our mind becomes informed, before long we shall hear a call.

Acts 16:9 - *And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.*

This call comes from over a billion souls who are still waiting for help. They have never heard of our Saviour - the only One who can really help them. Do we hear their earnest, beseeching call?

4. OUR HEART MUST FEEL.

What we see, think and hear will cause us to feel. Compare -

Lamentations 3:51 - *Mine eye affecteth mine heart because of all the daughters of my city.*

Matthew 9:36 - *But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.*

Luke 19:41-42 - *And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, 42 Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.*

Acts 20:31 - *Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.*

Are we moved with compassion as we think of the vast multitudes of lost, helpless, hopeless men and women, boys and girls who are bound by fear, superstition and degradation, who are passing one by one away in Christless guilt and gloom?

20. OUR LIPS MUST SPEAK.

If our heart begins to feel the desperate need of those who *forever may be lost*, then we shall be burdened to pray for labourers to be thrust forth into the world's great harvest fields.

Matthew 9:38 - *Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.*

Start compiling a Missionary Prayer List.
Start a Missionary Prayer Meeting in your church or home.

Philemon 2 - *And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house:*

Covenant with others to exercise this vital ministry.

Matthew 18:19 - *Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.*

6. OUR HANDS MUST WORK.

Yes, by now we shall want to do something in a very practical way. Our hands will want to work. How?

By corresponding with missionaries. By making and sending clothing and other articles to missionaries. By welcoming a tired missionary on furlough to our home for a rest. By gathering missionary information for our church. By giving our money.

Galatians 6:10 - *As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*

21. OUR FEET MUST GO.

All cannot go but many who could go are not going. Young person, have you placed yourself at your Lord's disposal for missionary service? If not, will you do so now?

Isaiah 6:8 - *Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.*

*The world's great heart is aching,
Aching fiercely in the night,
And God alone can heal it,
And God alone give light;*

*And the men to bear the message,
And to preach the living Word,
Are you and me, my brothers,
And all others who have heard.*

Closing challenge:

Can you say -

Acts 26:19 - *Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:*

TRIUMPHING IN TROUBLE

STUDY 10

Scripture Portion: Psalm 142:1-7

It was Joseph Parker, the London preacher of the last century, who said, *No preacher would ever lack a congregation if he preached to troubled hearts.*

Of course he was right, for when we address our words to troubled hearts, we are sure that we are speaking to everyone in the congregation or who reads our words.

Everyone, everywhere, sooner or later, experiences trouble and trial.

Psalm 34:19a -*Many are the afflictions of the righteous:*

In this **Psalm 142**, we find the writer, David, in great trouble. He speaks in -

Psalm 142:2 - *I poured out my complaint before him; I showed before him my trouble.*

of my trouble. The whole psalm teaches us how to be triumphant in trouble - not how to escape trouble, but how to glorify God in the midst of trouble.

22. WHAT ARE WE TOLD ABOUT DAVID'S TROUBLE?

It is important to see how David reacted to his trouble. Before we can do this, notice what he tells us about the nature of his trouble.

David, at this time, was a fugitive. His fortunes were at their lowest ebb. His reputation had gone and he was an outcast.

We do not know exactly what the trouble was to which he referred. This is helpful because it enables us to fit our own trouble into this picture.

We are, however, told three things.

41. David tells us that his trouble was very severe.

He was *overwhelmed* with it.

Psalm 142:3 - *When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.*

The word *overwhelmed* really means *wrapped about*, just as smoke from a bonfire billows up and wraps you about - it engulfs you.

Notice also that in -

Psalm 142:6 - *Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I.*

he tells us that, when his trouble came upon him, he was *brought very low*. This indicates a process. He went lower and lower until he felt he had touched bottom. Perhaps you are in the midst of an overwhelming experience at this time?

42. David tells us that other people had contributed to the severity of his trouble.

Psalm 142:3 - *When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.*

He says that his enemies had set a *snare* for him. They had set a trap for him.

In -

Psalm 142:6 - *Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I.*

he refers to them as his *persecutors*.

It is bad enough to be overwhelmed with trouble, but it is doubly bad to have trouble brought upon us through the disloyalty and malice of so-called friends.

Is that happening with you?

c. *David tells us that no one seemed to understand or care.*

This must have been the hardest part of all, for it is a tremendous help if, when we are in the midst of trouble, we feel and know that our loved ones and friends understand the

difficulties of our situation. David felt that no one understood. But - he was wrong, of course, because the Lord did.

2 Timothy 4:17 - *Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.*

It is important now for us to notice what David did when he was in his great trouble, how he reacted, because, when trouble comes upon us the important thing is how we react.

23. HOW DID DAVID REACT TO HIS TROUBLE?

The plain fact of the matter is that he triumphed over his trouble. But notice some things that he did not do when he was overwhelmed with trouble.

43. He did not brood over his trouble and do nothing at all about it.

This is important. Sometimes when we are in the midst of trouble we flop, become inactive and do nothing at all about it - and this is fatal.

44. He did not indulge in self-pity.

He did not feel sorry for himself and wallow in a *poor me* attitude to his situation.

c. *He did not become bitter and rebellious.*

He did not question God's love, wisdom and providence.

He did not become hard, critical and ill because of his trouble.

45. He did not overburden others with his trouble.

As a matter of fact, he tells us that there did not seem to be any others who could help him.

What did David do when his trouble overwhelmed him? He did three very important things.

(1) He brought his trouble before the Lord in prayer.

This is made very clear in -

Psalms 142:1-2 - *I cried unto the LORD with my voice; with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication.*

As we study these verses we are impressed with the intensity and the urgency of David's prayer in **verse 1**, the definiteness of his prayer in **verse 2**. The fact that his prayer was so practical, also in **verse 2**, for he says, *I shewed before Him my trouble*.

We instinctively think of Hezekiah, and see what he did, when he received a threatening letter from an enemy.

Isaiah 37:14 - *And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD.*

We think of the Christians in the early Church who were so troubled because Peter was in prison, and see what they did.

Acts 12:5 - *Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.*

This is how to react in a time of trouble. Bring the whole matter and bring ourselves before the Lord and ask for His gracious help. What happened when David did this?

(2) His faith and trust in God was deepened.

Psalms 142:3 - *When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.*
He tells us that he was confident that God knew his *path*.

This reminds us of -

Matthew 6:32 - *(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.*

Job 23:10 - *But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.*

It seems that David looked up into the face of the Lord and said, *It's all right, because the Lord knows all about me!*

See also what he said in -

Psalm 142:5 - *I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.*

This surely is faith triumphing in the midst of trouble.

It reminds us of -

Psalm 23:4 - *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*

(3) David was filled with hope.

He was filled with confidence concerning the future, that everything would plan out satisfactorily. It is one thing to trust God for the present moment, but what about the unknown future? What about tomorrow, and next week, and next month, and next year?

Shall I come out of my trouble? If we lose hope we become filled with despair.

Acts 27:20 - *And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.*

See what happens when hope goes. When hope goes we are desolate, but David had hope.

See what he says in -

Psalm 142:7 - *Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me.*

Notice the two *shalls* in this verse. One relates to man and the other to God.

Here, then, is the way to be triumphant in trouble.

(1) Engage in prayer.

(2) Prayer will strengthen faith.

(3) Faith will give hope and confidence concerning the future and God's loving undertaking and ultimate deliverance.

C. H. Spurgeon says, *The gloom of the cave is over the psalm. Yet, as if standing at the mouth of the cave itself, the prophet-poet David sees a bright light a little beyond.*

If you are in trouble, in the cave, in the darkness of trial, remember this - there is a bright light *a little beyond*. Do not lose hope. Put your trust in God Himself and all will be well.