

***FROM  
STRENGTH  
TO  
STRENGTH***

***TEACHER MANUAL***

**Lecture 9  
Studies 1 - 10**

**STEPHEN NEMETH LECTURES**

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# *From Strength To Strength*

## Teacher Manual

Lecture 9

Studies 1 - 10

Stephen Nemeth Lectures

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# ***THE SECRET OF THE BLESSED LIFE***

## **STUDY 1**

**Scripture Portion: Psalm 84**

**Key Verse - Psalm 84:12** - *O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.*

This series of ten studies is based upon -

**Psalm 84:7** - *They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.*

It is a series specially prepared for those who are “in Zion”. Zion in the Old Testament is a picture of the Church. Only those who have been born again “in Zion” are members of the true Church.

**Psalm 87:5** - *And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her.*

**Jeremiah 50:5** - *They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.*

**John 3:3** - *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.*

Again, this series will remind us that the Christian life is a life of progress. Those who are “in Zion.....go from strength to strength”.

**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.*

Finally, this series will keep before us the great prospect that is ours as pilgrim travelers; that through the grace and merit of our Saviour, every one of us who is truly “in Zion” will appear “before God”.

In the study of any scripture passage, it is good to look for the key verse, which, in **Psalm 84**, would seem to be **verse 12**, for everything in the psalm is connected with this statement: “O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee”.

The word “blessed” means “happy”, so here is a divinely inspired prescription for happiness. There are five ingredients in this prescription.

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There must be RECOGNITION OF GOD.

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The fundamental reason for all the unhappiness in the world is that God is left out of the lives of men and women.

**Psalm 14:1** - *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.*

Note that what “the fool” really says is “.....no God for me”! How different was the experience of the psalmist for in this psalm he addresses God by five names:

**a. He is the “Lord of hosts”.**

**Psalm 84:1** - *How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!*

**Psalm 84:3** - *Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God.*

**Psalm 84:8** - *O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.*

**Psalm 84:12** - *O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.*

Compare -

**Psalm 24:10** - *Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah.*

**Psalm 46:11** - *The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.*

**Malachi 3:17** - *And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.*

This title for the Lord, which in Hebrew is “**Jehovah Sabaoth**”, tells us of His great **POWER**.

**b. He is “the living God”.**

**Psalm 84:2** - *My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.*

What a wonderful title this is! He is alive and active on behalf of His children. Many today are worshiping a “dead” God, many in heathen lands and, alas, many in civilized lands.

**1 Timothy 6:17** - *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;*

Note that this title for the Lord tells us of His **PROVISION**.

3. He is “my King, and my God”.

**Psalms 84:3** - *Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God.*

The psalmist recognized Him as King of Kings. Compare and note that the following verses tell us of His **PRE-EMINENCE**.

**Isaiah 6:5** - *Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.*

**Philippians 2:9** - *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:*

**Colossians 1:18** - *And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.*

4. He is “the God of Jacob”.

**Psalms 84:8** - *O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.*

Not the God of Abraham, Moses or Elijah, but Jacob, the “supplanter” who became “a prince with God”.

**Genesis 32:28** - *And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.*

This title for the Lord tells us of His **PURPOSE**. It is His will for each one of us that the Jacob self-life should go and that we should be “more than conquerors”.

**Romans 8:37** - *Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*

*e. He is “God our shield”.*

**Psalms 84:9** - *Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.*

**Psalms 84:11** - *For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.*

Here, of course, we have a title for God which reminds us of His **PROTECTION**.

Thus, the first ingredient of a truly happy life is to recognize God as the all-powerful,

graciously-providing, pre-eminent One whose purpose is to transform us and to protect us for His glory.

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There must be DESIRE FOR GOD.

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The unconverted have no such desire.

**Romans 3:11** - *There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.*

But see what the man who recognizes God says -

**Psalm 84:2-3** - *My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.*

*3 Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God.*

He even envies the birds because they had made their nests and reared their families in the house of the Lord!

Do we yearn after Him like this? What do we desire most of all? What are we living for and setting our affections upon?

Read the words of the Lord Jesus as recorded in -

**Matthew 5:6** - *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*

Multitudes of men and women are hungering and thirsting after worldly pleasure, in which there is no satisfaction. See what the psalmist rightly says in -

**Psalm 84:10** - *For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.*

It is better to have the lowest place in the household of faith than the highest out of it.

**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.*

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### ***3. There must be WALKING WITH GOD.***

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Notice the description of this present life in -

**Psalm 84:6** - *Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth*

*the pools.*

We are all passing through the Valley of Baca (“weeping”). We all, sooner or later, come to know something of sorrow, disappointment and loss, for the road God calls us to walk must go by the way of the valley.

No one is exempt from the Baca experiences. But the great word in **verse 6** is “through”. The valley is not our home. We are passing through it and on into the presence of God.

**Psalm 84:7** - *They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.*

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4. There must be SPEAKING TO GOD.

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Psalm 84:8-9 - *O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah. 9 Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.*

Nothing is more likely to bring true happiness into our life than answered prayer. Answered prayer is a personal demonstration that our God is the living God who is vitally interested in us. What happens when we pray?

- a. We address our prayer to God. “O Lord.....hear my prayer.....”.*
- b. He bends down to listen. “Give ear, O God.....”.*
- c. He looks upon us to see our need and grant our request. “Look upon the face of Thine anointed.....”*

**Compare:-**

**Psalm 84:11b** - *.....the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.*

**James 4:2b** - *.....ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.*

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## **5. *There must be TRUST IN GOD.***

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**Psalm 84:11-12** - *For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.*

*12 O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.*

There must be an initial trust. When we recognize Him, our desire for Him increases and we begin to walk with and speak to Him. In short, when we accept the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour -

**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:*

Then there must be a day-by-day, moment-by-moment trust in Him. Notice the word “trusteth”. Dr. Scofield says that this word “trust” is the characteristic Old Testament word for the New Testament words “faith” and “believe”. It means -

**a. *to take refuge* -**

**Ruth 2:12** - *The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.*

**b. *to lean on* -**

**Psalm 56:3** - *What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.*

**c. *to roll on* -**

**Psalm 22:8** - *He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.*

**d. *to stay upon* -**

**Job 35:14** - *Although thou sayest thou shalt not see him, yet judgment is before him; therefore trust thou in him.*

As we trust Him, He gives **GRACE** for all the journey down here and **GLORY** at the end -

**Psalm 84:11** - *For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.*



# ***BELONGING TO THE KING OF KINGS***

## **STUDY 2**

**Scripture Portion: 1 Chronicles 12:18**

**1 Chronicles 12:18** - *Then the spirit came upon Amasai, who was chief of the captains, and he said, Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse: peace, peace be unto thee, and peace be to thine helpers; for thy God helpeth thee. Then David received them, and made them captains of the band.*

In this chapter David is brought before us as a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, “great David’s greater Son”. David was God’s appointed and anointed king, but only a few accepted him as such, for the majority were on the side of Saul.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the rightful King. God has appointed and anointed Him and -

**Philippians 2:9** - *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:*

But only a few accept Him as such. The vast majority reject Him.

“Our Lord is now rejected  
And by the world disowned:  
By the many still neglected,  
And by the few enthroned.”

During rejection, David needed men who not only believed in him secretly but who would come out boldly and be his followers. This is what our King needs today.

In this study, we shall see the kind of men (and women) our Lord needs. What are the characteristics of those who belong to the King and whom He needs?

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## ***1. HE NEEDS A VARIETY OF MEN WHO COME TO HIM OUT OF EVERY TRIBE AND NATION.***

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Read **1 Chronicles 12:24-37**. Notice the description given of the men who came to David out of many different tribes.

Today, while our King is rejected by the world, the Holy Spirit is calling out a people who, in a special sense, belong to Him and are on His side. This is the divine plan for this present dispensation. Compare -

**Acts 15:14-16** - *Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take*

*out of them a people for his name.*

*15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,*

*16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:*

**Luke 19:12** - *He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.*

Just as king David's loyal subjects came to him day by day, so the Holy Spirit is calling out men and women day by day to be the loyal subjects of our Saviour-King.

**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.*

Do you belong to this company of "called out" ones who have been -

born again by the Holy Spirit -

**1 Peter 1:23** - *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*

redeemed by the precious blood of Christ -

**1 Peter 1:19** - *But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:*

recognize the Lord Jesus as Saviour and King?

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**HE NEEDS MEN WHO ARE SEPARATED UNTO HIM.**

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**1 Chronicles 12:8** - *And of the Gadites there separated themselves unto David into the hold to the wilderness men of might, and men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains;*

Our weakness often is that we are mixed up with the world. Compare -

**2 Timothy 2:4** - *No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.*

**2 Corinthians 6:17** - *Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,*

**Hebrews 13:13** - *Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.*

It is a sad thing when, in these days, Christians side with those who, in their hearts, reject the King. In this chapter, we see that David required men of quality - selected, separated men. Are you one of these?

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### ***3. HE NEEDS MEN FULLY TRAINED AND EQUIPPED FOR WARFARE.***

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**1 Chronicles 12:2** - *And it came to pass, that in the fifth year of king Rehoboam Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, because they had transgressed against the LORD,*

**1 Chronicles 12:8** - *Nevertheless they shall be his servants; that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.*

**1 Chronicles 12:38** - *All these men of war, that could keep rank, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel: and all the rest also of Israel were of one heart to make David king.*

Do not imagine that to be a Christian is an easy-going business! The kind of soldiers our Lord wants is indicated by these verses -

“.....armed with bows.....who could use both the right hand and the left in hurling stones and shooting arrows.....men of might.....men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains.....men that could keep rank.....with a perfect heart.”

The warfare in which we are engaged is a stern one. Our enemy is very powerful.

**Ephesians 6:12** - *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

If we are to be of any use in waging this great spiritual warfare, we must be trained, disciplined and properly equipped. We must know not only how to put on the whole armour of God -

**Ephesians 6:13-17** - *Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*

*14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;*

*15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;*

*16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery*

*darts of the wicked.*

*17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:*

but how to use the two weapons - the Word of God -

**Hebrews 4:12** - *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

and the prayer of faith -

**James 5:15** - *And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*

**James 5:17-18** - *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.*

*18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.*

Also, we must be men who have “understanding of the times” -

**1 Chronicles 12:32** - *And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment.*

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4. HE NEEDS MEN WHO WILL COUNT NOT THEIR LIVES DEAR TO THEMSELVES.

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The warfare in which David’s men were engaged was a very costly one, but they were willing to go ahead, even if it meant death.

**1 Chronicles 12:15** - *These are they that went over Jordan in the first month, when it had overflowed all his banks; and they put to flight all them of the valleys, both toward the east, and toward the west.*

Picture the scene - a company of men crossing Jordan when the river was in flood! They were men of grit and backbone.

With all the forces of evil, with all the difficulties that confront the true servants of God, with all the efforts of Satan to overthrow the Word of God, Christians are needed who have strength and courage as Daniel did -

**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.*

**Daniel 6:16-24** - *Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.*

*17 And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.*

*18 Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him: and his sleep went from him.*

*19 Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions.*

*20 And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?*

*21 Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever.*

*22 My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.*

*23 Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.*

*24 And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.*

of the Barnabas and Paul type -

**Acts 15:26** - *Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

It is very costly to be a Christian in many parts of the world today. Maybe many of us who have thus far been spared, may have to suffer real persecution for Christ's sake before long.

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## ***5. HE NEEDS MEN OF SUPERNATURAL STRENGTH.***

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**1 Chronicles 12:8b** - *.....men of might, and men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains;*

**1 Chronicles 12:21** - *And they helped David against the band of the rovers: for they were all mighty men of valour, and were captains in the host.*

What mighty men David had in his army! Here we have an illustration of the fact that one with God is a majority.

**Deuteronomy 32:30** - *How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had shut them up?*

David, with his sling, plus God, is a match for any Goliath -

**1 Samuel 17:50** - *So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David.*

Gideon and his 300, plus God, is a match for any invading army -

**Judges 7:22** - *And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host: and the host fled to Bethshittah in Zererath, and to the border of Abelmeholah, unto Tabbath.*

Peter, plus God, can easily secure his 3,000 -

**Acts 2:14** - *But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:*

**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.*

How have such great victories been achieved by such 'ordinary' men and women?

**1 Chronicles 12:18** - *Then the spirit came upon Amasai, who was chief of the captains, and he said, Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse: peace, peace be unto thee, and peace be to thine helpers; for thy God helpeth thee. Then David received them, and made them captains of the band.*

"The Spirit of the Lord" - the Holy Spirit -

**Zechariah 4:6** - *Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.*

**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.*

The need today is for men and women strong in faith -

**Romans 4:19-20** -*And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb:*

and filled with the Holy Spirit -

**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.*

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## **6. HE NEEDS MEN OF UNQUESTIONED LOYALTY.**

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**1 Chronicles 12:16-18** - *And there came of the children of Benjamin and Judah to the hold unto David.*

*17 And David went out to meet them, and answered and said unto them, If ye be come peaceably unto me to help me, mine heart shall be knit unto you: but if ye be come to betray me to mine enemies, seeing there is no wrong in mine hands, the God of our fathers look thereon, and rebuke it.*

*18 Then the spirit came upon Amasai, who was chief of the captains, and he said, Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse: peace, peace be unto thee, and peace be to thine helpers; for thy God helpeth thee. Then David received them, and made them captains of the band.*

Compare with -

**Matthew 11:6** - *And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.*

It is easy to doubt and fear if we look at circumstance, but, it is vital that, through all the worsening conditions around us, we remain loyal to our King.

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5. HE NEEDS MEN WHO ARE POSSESSED WITH ONE SUPREME DESIRE.

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1 Chronicles 12:23 - *And these are the numbers of the bands that were ready armed to the war, and came to David to Hebron, to turn the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of the LORD.*

**1 Chronicles 12:31** - *And of the half tribe of Manasseh eighteen thousand, which were expressed by name, to come and make David king.*

**1 Chronicles 12:38** - *All these men of war, that could keep rank, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel: and all the rest also of Israel were of one heart to make David king.*

We read here that David's men had one burning desire - to make him king.

That also should be our desire. Our King is surely coming - soon! In the light of His coming, and on the eve of His coming, can you look up into His face and say -

**1 Chronicles 12:18** - *Then the spirit came upon Amasai, who was chief of the captains, and he said, Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse: peace, peace be unto thee, and peace be to thine helpers; for thy God helpeth thee. Then David received them, and made them captains of the band.*

“Thine am I, Lord Jesus, and on Thy Side!”  
Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”

**Revelation 22:20** - *He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*



# ***DOING WHATEVER HE SAYS***

## **STUDY 3**

**Scripture Portion: John 2:1-11**

**John 2:1-11** - *And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there:*

*2 And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.*

*3 And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.*

*4 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.*

*5 His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.*

*6 And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.*

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

*8 And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.*

*9 When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom,*

*10 And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.*

*11 This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.*

**Key verse - John 2:5** - *His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.*

In our key verse we have the golden rule of a happy and useful Christian life. Do we want to know His joy, peace and blessing upon our service? Do we want our life to be well pleasing to Him in all things? Do we want our prayers to be answered? Are we seeking fresh and enlarged fields of service? Do we need guidance?

Then, we must do what He says. If we can live in obedience to this golden rule, we shall always be filled with the glory of His presence, power and blessing. Read **John 2:1-11**.

Notice what a remarkable claim Mary makes for the Lord Jesus - "Whatsoever He says, however contrary it may seem to your ideas, do it"! Read **John 2:1-11** again.

How could she be so confident? Because He was, and is, unique. He is the Son of God.

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1. **CONSIDER THE FACT THAT HE DOES SPEAK TO US TODAY.**

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a. He speaks to us **AUTHORITATIVELY**.

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

If He is the Lord then it is His sovereign right to dictate in your life and mine. What He says is the final word on any given matter. If we know Him as Lord, why do we question what He says? For what He says is invested with all the authority of what He is.

b. *He speaks to us PERSONALLY.*

“Whatsoever HE saith unto YOU, do it!” He spoke personally to the servants. The guests did not know what He had said. He speaks in the same way today.

c. *He speaks to us COMPREHENSIVELY.*

Notice the word “whatsoever”. He speaks to us about the little details as well as about the big problems of life - about the wine that has run short, and other temporal things. In fact, there is no detail connected with our lives about which He does not speak to us.

d. *He speaks to us INSTRUMENTALLY.*

That is, He speaks through others. How often we hear the voice of the Lord through the wise and helpful counsel of our friends!

While we must recognize the principle stated in -

**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:*

we must also recognize that the Lord often guides us through the counsel of other Christians.

e. *He speaks to us PROVIDENTIALLY.*

That is, through the daily happenings and circumstances of our life. By closing one door and opening another. By saying to us -

**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.*

He speaks to us through what we read, what we hear, what we see. If we are listening, we will not fail to hear His voice.

***f. He speaks to us THROUGH HIS WORD.***

This is the particular way in which He speaks to us today.

**John 6:63** - *It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*

There is no “spirit and life” in the daily paper, the writings of our great poets or in the latest novel! The Lord supremely speaks to us in and through His Word (the **Bible**). Anything which we feel to be His voice to us which is contrary to His Word is certainly not His voice.

***g. He speaks to us BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.***

Notice in the **Acts of the Apostles**, the constant unerring directions that were given by the Holy Spirit to the servants of the Lord in the first century.

Yes, the Lord speaks to us today just as definitely as He did to the servants at the marriage feast of Cana in Galilee.

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2. **CONSIDER THE FACT THAT ALL THAT THE LORD SAYS TO US HAS A THREEFOLD RELATIONSHIP.**

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***a. When the Lord Jesus said, “Fill.....draw.....bear.....”***

-

**John 2:7-8** - *Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.*

*8 And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.*

it was for His glory.

**John 2:11** - *This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.*

tells us this. We can be sure that, whenever He speaks to us about something in our life, something He wants us to be, to do or to say, it is always for His glory. In other words, to listen to what He says and to render Him full obedience will always glorify Him.

***b. When the Lord Jesus said, “Fill.....draw.....bear.....”***

-

**John 2:7-8** - *Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.*

*8 And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.*

it was for their (the servants') good. How do we know? Because in -

**John 2:9** - *When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom,*

we are told that, while the governor and the guests did not know about the miracle, the servants did. Is it not most likely that, having seen the miracle, they believed on Him?

What a great spiritual blessing came to them when they heard the commandment of the Lord and obeyed Him!

**Deuteronomy 6:24** - *And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day.*

Note the words, "for our good always". Also -

**Deuteronomy 10:12-13** - *And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,*

*13 To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?*

Everything the Lord says to us is always for our good. It is always for our profit that we should obey the Lord. Compare -

**1 John 5:3** - *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.*

**Matthew 11:30** - *For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

**c. When the Lord Jesus said, "Fill.....draw.....bear....."**

-

**John 2:7-8** - *Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.*

8 And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.

it was for the good of everybody else concerned. Everybody at the feast benefited from the miracle that resulted. When the Lord speaks to us, it is not only for His glory and for our good, but it is for the good of everybody whom we touch, in the home, the office or wherever we may be.

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3. CONSIDER, FINALLY, HOW WE SHOULD RESPOND TO WHAT HE SAYS.

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We should respond with PROMPT obedience.

Whatsoever.....do it!" They did not delay. John Bunyan said, "The soul of religion is in the practice part", that is, the doing of it. Our whole duty is to do what He says, and to do it, not as a duty, but as a delight.

***b. We should respond with COMPLETE obedience.***

The Lord's command was "Fill.....", **verse 7**. How did they obey? "They filled them up to the brim", **verse 7**.

There is a danger of rendering to the Lord only partial obedience. But His demand is that we obey Him fully. Is He not worthy of our complete and full obedience?

5. We should respond with UNQUESTIONING obedience.

The word is "whatsoever". That means we must obey Him without any questioning or dispute.

Fancy being told to fill the water pots with water when wine was needed! Fancy being told to bear water to the governor of the feast! Yet, they gave to the Lord their unquestioning obedience.

Sooner or later there comes to us all the felt need of a supreme dictation - that is, of someone who will take the full responsibility of our lives and exercise His lordship over them. Our Lord Jesus offers to take that place in your life and mine. It is His right alone to take it.

Shall we give it to Him?

# ***THE WONDER OF THE WORD***

## **STUDY 4**

**Scripture Portion: Hebrews 4:12**

**Hebrews 4:12** - *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

Of all the inspired titles that the Holy Spirit uses concerning the Bible, perhaps the most precious is “The Word Of God”. Compare the following scriptures.

**Ephesians 6:17** - *And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:*

**1 Peter 1:23** - *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*

**Hebrews 4:12** - *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*

But, does our key verse refer to the Bible (the written Word) or to the Lord Jesus Himself (the incarnate Word)?

**John 1:1** - *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

Some Bible students believe that the reference here is to Christ, the incarnate Word.

**John 1:13** - *Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

would seem to support this view.

On the other hand, many other students of the Word, with equal conviction, feel that the reference here is to the written Word.

We suggest that both views are right. The two Words are inseparable, for the only revelation we have of the incarnate Word is in the written Word. The incarnate Word always leads us to an appreciation of the whole of the written Word.

**Hebrews 4:12** - *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

perfectly and accurately describes the written Word. In this one verse, we are told five

important things about it.

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### It is DIVINE in its ORIGIN.

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Where does this “Word”, our Bible (written by about forty different writers over a period of approximately 1600 years) come from? It certainly came from the hands of the various writers, but they were only the human instruments, for God is the Author of the Book. It is the Word of God.

In many respects it is like any other book - printed on paper, divided into chapters and verses for easy reference, available in many languages.

But, from **Genesis 1** to **Revelation 22**, the Bible is the Word of God, by which we mean that the whole of it was recorded by divine authority and under divine supervision.

We do not mean that God spoke all the words contained in it, but that He over-ruled in all the words recorded in it, whether they were spoken by Himself, by men, angels or demons.

Thus, the Word of God is of supernatural origin. Therefore it is unique.

**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.*

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## ***2. It is LIVING in its NATURE.***

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It is spoken of as being “quick”, or, literally, “living” or “full of life”.

How did this Book become a living book? A comparison of the following scriptures tells us.

**Genesis 1:26** - *And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.*

**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.*

Just as God breathed into man the breath of life and man became a living soul, so He has breathed into this Book so that it has become a living Book. The word “inspiration” in

**2 Timothy 3:16** literally means “God-breathed”.

In what way is the Word of God living?

**a. *It is living in itself.***

Compare -

**John 6:63** - *It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*

**Proverbs 6:22** - *When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.*

**b. *It is life-giving, that is, it imparts life.***

**James 1:18** - *Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.*

**1 Peter 1:23** - *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*

Seeds do not appear to contain life any more than Bibles do! But, seeds do contain life - and so does the Word of God. Wherever the Word of God (the incorruptible seed) is sown, it brings forth a harvest. Compare -

**Isaiah 55:11** - *So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*

**Matthew 13:23** - *But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.*

**c. *It is out-living, that is, it outlives all other books.***

This is one of the greatest wonders of the Word of God. Men have burned it. The devil had tried to exterminate it. But it is still the most widely-read book. See what -

**1 Peter 1:23-25** - *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*

*24 For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:*

*25 But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.*



says about the durability of the Word of God.

See what the Lord Jesus said about it -

**Matthew 24:35** - *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.*

How important it is to give heed to this Word!

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3. It is POWERFUL in its OPERATION.

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“Quick and powerful”. It is effectual. It does things.

**Ecclesiastes 8:4** - *Where the word of a king is, there is power: and who may say unto him, What doest thou?*

How does the power of God’s Word operate? How is it seen and felt?

**a. It cuts like a two-edged sword.**

“Sharper than any two edged-sword”, both edges are sharp.

**Hebrews 4:12** - *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

One old writer said, “It is edge all over!”

Have we not often experienced its sharpness to convict us of sin?

**Acts 2:37** - *Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?*

**c. It pierces to the inward parts.**

**Psalms 51:6** - *Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.*

God must have reality and sincerity. The instrument He uses to penetrate to the inward parts of our nature is the Word of God. How piercing it is!

**Acts 7:54** - *When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.*

**Revelation 19:15** - *And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.*

3. It discriminates between soul and spirit.

Man is a tri-partite being.

**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.*

But who can divide between spirit, soul and body? Every Christian has two natures - the old Adamic nature and the new nature.

**Galatians 5:17** - *For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*

But who can discern between them and can discern that which is merely “soulish” and that which is really spiritual?

Well, the Word of God can do it. It is the only instrument which can effectively do it. We cannot accurately discriminate between the desires of the flesh and those of the spirit. But, if we allow the Holy Spirit to apply the Word of God to our lives, then (and only then) will this correct diagnosis and precise discrimination be made.

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4. It is FINAL in its JUDGMENT.

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The Word of God is “a discerner (or critic) of the thoughts and intents of the hearts”. This is very significant, for it teaches us that we are not to criticize it. Rather, we are to let it criticize us.

A critic is one who passes judgment upon a subject or person. God’s Word passes judgment upon man. Because it is divine in its origin, it is therefore infallible. The judgment it passes upon us is final and true.

We are surrounded by two kinds of critics - destructive and constructive.

God’s Word always gives constructive criticism. We may not always like it, but, if we will take it, it will always be for our good. For example, read -

**Jeremiah 17:9** - *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*

**Mark 7:21** - *For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,*

Could we like that? Yet, it is true. We can only profit by admitting it and believing it.

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5. It is CLEAR in its DEMAND.

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Notice the first words in our key verse: “For the Word of God.....” This links us to the previous verses and indicates the demand that this Word makes upon us. Namely, a twofold demand:

*a. Faith, or trust, as indicated by -*

**Hebrews 4:2** - *For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.*

4. Obedience, as indicated by -

**Hebrews 4:11** - *Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.*

The way to be happy, holy, useful and to glorify God is to read the Word of God, believe (trust it) and obey it!

“Trust and obey,  
For there’s no other way  
To be happy in Jesus,  
But to trust and obey.”

# **WHY, WHEN, AND HOW TO PRAY**

## **STUDY 5**

**Scripture Portion: Luke 18:1-43**

**Key Verse - Luke 18:1** - *And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;*

Nothing is more important in the life of the Christian than that there should be a right understanding of, and a regular engaging in, the privilege of prayer. Prayer means contact with, communion with, and fellowship with God. It is not simply asking God for things, though it does include that.

Our Lord related the parable in **Luke 18:1-8** in order to stress the great importance of prayer. He said, “Men ought always to pray.....”. This is, of course, a comprehensive word. It is the privilege of all to pray. In this **chapter 18 of Luke’s Gospel**, we are given five examples -

(1) *a praying widow* -

**Luke 18:3** - *And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.*

(2) *a praying Pharisee* -

**Luke 18:10** - *Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.*

(3) *a praying publican* -

**Luke 18:13** - *And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.*

(4) *a praying ruler* -

**Luke 18:18** - *And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*

(5) *and a praying beggar* -

**Luke 18:38** - *And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.*

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1. **WHY** ought we to pray?

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There are many answers to this question, but let us confine our answer to the suggestion that arises out of the word “ought”. It means, “Men owe it to pray.....”. Thus prayer is an obligation. Why ought we to pray? How is it an obligation?

**a. *We owe it to ourselves to pray.***

In the infinite mercy of God we have been given a new life. By the miracle of the new birth we have been made partakers of the divine nature.

**1 Peter 1:4** - *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

This life can only be maintained and kept virile by prayer. Only as we pray can our lives be what God wants them to be, can we know the secret of victory over sin and the power of the enemy, can our Christian service be what it ought to be.

We owe it to ourselves to pray, for, without prayer, we can never be the Christians we want to be - or that God wants us to be!

***b. We owe it to others to pray.***

We can exercise an amazing ministry on behalf of others if we know how to pray. If this is true, how solemn a thing it is not to pray for them!

**1 Samuel 12:23** - *Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way:*

As we think of the need, the sin, the sorrow, the suffering and the broken hearts around us, is it not an obligation for us to pray for God's gracious relief, help and salvation to be given to those needy souls?

We owe it to our loved ones and friends to pray for them.

***c. We owe it to our Lord to pray.***

In His Word, God has given us many great and precious promises -

**2 Peter 1:4** - *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

Each of them invites us to trust Him and to secure from Him all that we need for life and service down here. God has, as it were, given to us a blank cheque book. Each cheque is signed with the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

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

The resources in the Bank of Heaven are exhaustless.

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

Do we not owe it to our Lord to cash these cheques, to honour His promises, to go to Him regularly in prayer and to draw upon the boundless supplies of divine grace and power that are available to us?

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2. WHEN ought we to pray?

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The answer is, “Always!” Which means at all times and in all circumstances. See how the apostle Paul puts it in -

**Ephesians 6:18** - *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;*

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

When ought we to pray?

5. At regular stated times.

We do many things daily by habit. We should form the habit of prayer.

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

**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.*

**b. When the Holy Spirit urges us.**

Have we not all had this experience?

**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.*

As surely as we go into the place of prayer, so surely is the Holy Spirit present to guide us in our praying. It is wonderful to be thus guided by Him to pray for someone for whom previously we had no thought of praying, then afterwards to discover that our prayer was the channel through which God met a special need.

**c. When cares and troubles press upon us.**

Some people only pray when trouble comes. This is very sad, though it is true that the Lord does give a special promise for times of trouble.

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

Notice that His promise is not for deliverance from the trouble but for something better - deliverance in the trouble. Paul and Silas enjoyed such a deliverance.

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

#### ***d. At all times of special need.***

Such times arise in the life of all of us. Compare -

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

**James 5:13-15** - *Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.*

*14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:*

*15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*

**James 5:17-18** - *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.*

*18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.*

There is a place for private prayer -

**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.*

But there is a special invitation to, and value in, united prayer. Compare -

**Matthew 18:19-20** - *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.*

20 *For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*

**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.*

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

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### 3. HOW ought we to pray?

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In **Luke 18** we have three special illustrations of the way in which we are to pray. Notice these -

**a. *We are to pray like the publican and not like the Pharisee.***

**Luke 18:10-13** - *Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.*

11 *The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.*

12 *I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.*

13 *And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.*

That is, we are to pray with no confidence in ourselves. All our confidence must be in the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ, who shed His blood for us so that we (though sinners) can approach a holy God in prayer.

**Luke 18:13** - *And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.*

If we come to God like the Pharisee, He will not hear us. If we come to Him like the publican, He will hear us.



***b. We are to pray importunately, without fainting.***

**Luke 18:1-8** - *And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;*

*2 Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:*

*3 And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.*

*4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;*

*5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.*

*6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.*

*7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?*

*8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*

Alas, how weary we get and how quickly we faint in this matter of prayer! Yes, and we so easily get discouraged if God does not seem to send the answer at once.

Read this parable of the importunate widow, and note that the lesson is this: "If a bad man (and the unjust judge was that) will yield to the entreaty of a poor widow, how much more will God yield to the earnest prayers of His people!"

**Luke 18:38-39** - *And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.*

*39 And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou son of David, have mercy on me.*

6. We are to pray with childlike simplicity and trust.

**Luke 18:16-17** - *But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.*

*17 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.*

We must always come before God as children coming to their heavenly Father. "Prayer is the simplest form of speech that infant lips can try."

Are you proving what a practical thing prayer is and that nothing is too great or too small to pray about?

# ***THE CONQUEST OF WORRY***

## **STUDY 6**

**Scripture Portion: Isaiah 51:12-13**

**Isaiah 51:12-13 -**

This study is a very simple one, but its aim is to deliver a death-blow at this terrible “oppressor” called Worry. A modern writer has entitled his best selling book, “How to Stop Worrying and Start Living”. We might well take that for the title of this present Bible Study.

But, do we need such a study? Yes, for most of us worry either about something that happened yesterday, something that is almost certainly going to happen today, or something that may or may not happen tomorrow. Yet it is still perfectly true that - “If we worry, we do not trust. If we trust, we do not worry”.

With our Bible open before us, let us emphasize two main truths: it is both sinful and foolish for a Christian to worry.

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### **1. WHY IS IT SINFUL FOR A CHRISTIAN TO WORRY?**

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#### ***a. It is sinful because worry is dishonouring to the Lord.***

When we worry we doubt God. Nothing dishonours Him so much as when His people fail to trust Him.

**Matthew 14:31 -**

**Hebrews 3:12 -**

Do you not think it is a sin for a Christian to worry? Compare -  
**Romans 14:23b -**

**Hebrews 11:6 -**

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If we, the children of God, are filled with fear and worry, is that of faith? See what the Lord Jesus said in -

**Matthew 6:34 -**

.

Remember that all His commands are His enablings.

***b. It is sinful because worry is damaging to ourselves.***

Nothing works greater havoc in our life than persistent, gnawing worry and fear. It has often been said that it is not work that kills but worry. Worry damages us mentally and physically.

It is also damaging spiritually, for worry robs us of peace and power and places a barrier between ourselves and God. Worry paralyzes Christian work and witness. Compare -

**Philippians 4:6-7 -**

**1 Peter 5:7 -**

***c. It is sinful because worry is detrimental to others.***

When a Christian worries, his testimony is affected. As Christians, we are believers. If the world sees us full of unbelief, what stumbling blocks we must be! We believe God and yet we are filled with worry.

On the other hand, if, when in the midst of trial and stress, a Christian manifests a quiet confidence in God, what a great testimony this is to the world! How calm the Lord Jesus was on the eve of His arrest, His trial and His crucifixion!

**John 14:27 -**

**Isaiah 30:15 -**

***d. It is sinful because worry is desirable to the devil.***

When we worry we play right into his hands. For this reason, if for no other, it is a sin to worry. Anything we knowingly allow in our life which plays into the devil's hands is a sin. Compare -

**Acts 12:6 -**

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**John 21:18-19 -**

Why was Peter so restful and able to sleep in prison, even with the threat of death hanging over him? It was because he was trusting in the word of the Lord Jesus. He had told Peter that he would not die until he was old. Just then, Peter was far from being old.

How Satan would have cheered if he had seen Peter stewing instead of sleeping. How pleased he is when we worry instead of trust.

Incidentally, if Peter had worried, it would all have been futile for he would have been worrying about something that would never happen as, in answer to prayer, he was released from prison.

**Acts 12:17 -**

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## 2. WHY IS IT FOOLISH FOR A CHRISTIAN TO WORRY?

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It is foolish to worry when we consider that the thing we are worrying about may never happen. But suppose it does happen? What then? It is still foolish for the following reasons.

It is foolish because we gain absolutely nothing by worrying.

Can you think of any possible gain? Of course, if, in the goodness of God, we have sought and found deliverance from worry, we are qualified to help others to seek and find similar deliverance. But, apart from this reflex benefit, there is absolutely no direct value in worrying at all.

***b. It is foolish because, if we have worried, we are less ready to meet the experiences of life when they do come.***

We are less fortified to meet the crises of life if worry has already exhausted us, for it dissipates our moral, spiritual and physical energies. It is a fact that worry does more harm than the actual thing about which we are worrying.

**1 Kings 19:4 -**

3. It is foolish because whatever happens will only be with God's permission.

Incidentally, never speak about "fate", or "chance" or use the expression "touch wood"! This is pure superstition which has no place in a Christian's life. Whatever happens in the life of a Christian happens in the permissive will of God.

**Psalm 42:7-8 -**

"Plagues and death around me fly,  
'Till He bids I cannot die;  
Not a single shaft can hit  
'Till the God of love sees fit."

4. It is foolish because whatever happens will always be for our good.

**Romans 8:28 -**

Underline the word "all" in your Bible. Remember, there is a blessing in every trouble that comes. All of us would be the poorer if we never knew what it was to experience any testing or trial.

- e. It is foolish because even if the worst that we fear happens, God's grace will be sufficient.*

**2 Corinthians 12:9 -**

We worry because we have not sufficient grace to meet some dreaded trial. The grace will only be given with the trial - not beforehand!

6. It is foolish because the promises of God will never fail.

Look up some of them.

**Psalm 9:10 -**

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**Psalm 46:1 -**

**Psalm 73:23-24 -**

**Isaiah 43:2 -**

**Zephaniah 3:17 -**

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**2 Timothy 4:18 -**

**Hebrews 13:5-6 -**

7. It is foolish because nothing can ever happen to separate us from the love of Christ.

What are you worrying about? Why are you anxious?

**Romans 8:35-39 -**

Read -

**Matthew 6:25-33 -**

# ***THE MARKS OF THE LORD JESUS***

## **STUDY 7**

**Scripture Portion: Galatians 6:17**

**Galatians 6:17** - *From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.*

The apostle Paul wore a badge that marked him out as being a true servant of our Lord Jesus Christ. He bore in his body “the marks of the Lord Jesus”. Is there anything about us that marks us out as belonging to Christ and identifies us with Him?

The word “I” is emphatic in the Greek. Paul said, “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.” Was he boasting? No, but in this epistle, Paul was vindicating his ministry. Many of the Jewish teachers had subverted these Galatian Christians into believing that he was not truly an apostle because he had not known the Lord Jesus in the days of His flesh.

So Paul compared himself with these judaizing teachers. He asked, “Have they the marks of the Lord Jesus upon them? No - but I have!”

What is the proof of our attachment to Christ? Is it the words we speak? No, not primarily. There should be some distinctive marks about our lives that identify us as Christians.

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### **1. THE LITERAL EXPLANATION OF THE APOSTLE’S STATEMENT.**

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What did he mean when he said -

**Galatians 6:17** - *From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.*

He had in mind a common custom of those days, namely, that of branding certain people with a hot searing iron. For example: slaves were branded as a mark of ownership. They were also branded as a mark of shame. If a man ran away and was recaptured, his master would brand him as a mark of shame and ignominy.

Soldiers were branded as a mark of allegiance to their generals, just as, at one time, soldiers would have the crest of their favorite general tattooed upon their arm. Religious devotees would frequently be branded by the priests in some heathen temple as a mark of devotion and fidelity.

The brand marks of the Lord Jesus upon the body of Paul consisted of each of these. They identified him as the slave of Christ.

**Philemon 1** - *Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon*



*our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer,*

They were the marks of shame and reproach in the eyes of the world.

**1 Corinthians 9:22** - *To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*

They were the brand marks of the soldier.

**2 Timothy 4:7** - *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:*

They were marks of devotion and fidelity.

**2 Corinthians 5:14** - *For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:*

But, what were the actual marks? They were the bodily scars and blemishes which he had received as the result of the persecution he suffered because of his faithfulness to the Lord Jesus. For a description of the fearful physical suffering he endured, turn to -

**2 Corinthians 11:23-28** - *Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.*

*24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.*

*25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;*

*26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;*

*27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.*

*28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.*

*Notice particularly the five kinds of suffering mentioned.*

(1) **“in prisons more frequent.....”**.

**Acts 16:23** - *And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:*

**Ephesians 3:1** - *For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,*

(2) **“in deaths oft.....”**.

Paul was frequently exposed to death. It seems certain that, on one occasion, he was actually killed, though God mercifully raised him up. Compare -

**Acts 14:19-20** - *And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.*

*20 Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.*

**2 Corinthians 12:1-4** - *It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.*

*2 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.*

*3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)*

*4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.*

**(3) “five times received I forty stripes save one.....”.**

These were inflicted with a long leather strap divided into thongs, on each of which was attached stones and pieces of metal. Thus, the back would soon be lacerated and torn.

**(4) “thrice.....beaten with rods.....”.**

This method of punishment was inflicted on Paul and Silas at Philippi.

**Acts 16:22** - *And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them.*

**(5) “once was I stoned.....”.**

Large boulders, as heavy as a man could lift, would be hurled at the victim until his body was reduced to a pulp. This descriptive passage of scripture explains the marks on Paul's body - the brand marks of the Lord Jesus. Do they not put us to shame? Most of us want to be popular Christians, and we know little of suffering for Christ's sake.

Let us remember those in many lands today who are suffering much at the hands of men and who are, for their Lord's sake, bearing in their body “the marks of the Lord Jesus”.

Let us pray that, should we ever be called upon to suffer shame for His name, we may be given grace to be faithful, even unto death.

**Revelation 2:10** - *Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*

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## 2. THE SPIRITUAL APPLICATION OF THE APOSTLE'S STATEMENT.

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The description of Paul's suffering does not apply to many of us, but there is a spiritual application which applies to all who name the name of Christ. Just as those physical marks branded Paul as one of Christ's slaves, as His property, as His soldier and as His

follower, so there should be upon us spiritual marks that brand us as belonging to Him.

What are these marks?

A cluster of fruit.

**Galatians 5:22-23** - *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,  
23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

These are the marks of the Lord Jesus for He personified them all. As we are united with Him by faith, these marks will characterize our life also.

A spirit of meekness.

**Galatians 6:1** - *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*

This is one of the fruits of the Spirit mentioned above. But it is such an important characteristic of the real Christian that we give it special and separate emphasis. The opposite of this spirit of meekness is mentioned in -

**Galatians 5:26** - *Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.*

“desirous of vain glory”.

The apostle says, “Don’t be proud!”

Jesus says -

**Matthew 11:28-30** - *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

*29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*

*30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

**c. A willingness to share the burdens of others.**

**Galatians 6:2** - *Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*

What a true mark of the Lord Jesus this is! If we truly follow in His steps, we shall do likewise.

4. A willingness to help support those who minister.

Galatians 6:6 - *Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Compare -*

**1 Corinthians 9:7-15** - *Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?*

8 *Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also?*

9 *For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?*

10 *Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.*

11 *If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?*

12 *If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.*

13 *Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?*

14 *Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.*

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.*

**1 Timothy 5:18** - *For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.*

*e. A life made up of “well doing”.*

**Galatians 6:9-10** - *And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

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

**Acts 10:38** - *How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.*

Do we “go about” with the same objective in view?

6. A complete separation from the world.

Galatians 6:14b - *.....by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*

If the marks of the Lord Jesus are upon us, we shall recognize that, while we are in the world, we are not of it. We shall see to it that His prayer for us is fulfilled.

**John 17:15-16** - *I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.*

16 *They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*

### ***g. A glorying in the Cross.***

**Galatians 6:14** - *But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*

What does this mean? We shall glory in the preaching of the cross, the story of the cross, and, above all, in the victory and the virtue of the cross. For it is through the cross of Jesus that we are saved and sanctified.

Think what the cross meant to Him. In what sense did He glory in it? The cross to Him was the token of God’s will for Him. He gloried in doing the will of His Father. Do we? That, supremely, is the mark of the Lord Jesus which should be upon all His followers.

The will of God was the consuming passion of His life.

**Luke 22:42** - *Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.*

It should be the consuming passion of your life and mine.

Let us ask the Lord that He will honour us by placing upon us “the marks of the Lord Jesus” so that others may more readily see whose we are and whom we serve, until the time comes when we are able to say with the apostle -

**2 Timothy 4:6-8** - *For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.*

7 *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:*

8 *Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that*

*love his appearing.*

# **WHAT WENT WRONG?**

## **STUDY 8**

**Scripture Portion: Galatians 5:7**

**Galatians 5:7** - *Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?*

What a wonderful thing it is when someone is converted! A truly converted person is born again -

**1 Peter 1:23** - *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*

**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.*

justified -

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

and is made a partaker of the divine nature -

**2 Peter 1:4** - *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

Do you recall the day of your conversion? If you do not remember the day, are you sure you have been converted?

But it is inexpressibly sad when one who has been truly converted turns back -

**Acts 7:39** - *To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt,*

backslides -

**Proverbs 14:14** - *The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.*

becomes lukewarm -

**Revelation 3:16** - *So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.*

loses his first love -

**Revelation 2:4** - *Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.*

What a tragedy - to be out-and-out for Christ, a soul winner, an earnest worker and then to turn away from the Lord!

There were those in the Galatian Church in A.D. 56 (when Paul wrote his epistle), who had been turned aside by false teachers who had succeeded in getting them into bondage again to the Law.

The thought conveyed in our key verse is that the Christian life is a race. Paul used this metaphor in -

**1 Corinthians 9:24** - *Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.* Compare -

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

But our key verse tells us that we may be hindered in the race. Weymouth translates **Galatians 5:7** as follows:

*“Who has got in the way of your obeying?”*

And a literal translation might well be, “Who has jostled you?”

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1. WHAT HINDERED YOU? WAS IT THE INCONSISTENCY OF PROFESSING CHRISTIANS?

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Then, you need to take heed to -

**1 Peter 2:21** - *For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:*

Did you look to other Christians and seek to follow their example, and even put them on a pedestal? Then, when you discovered that they were not as perfect as you had thought, were you disappointed and discouraged? There is only one whom we can set up as our example, and that is our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.



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

It is most essential to look off, away from oneself, one's circumstances and from other Christians, unto Jesus Himself.

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2. WHAT HINDERED YOU? WAS IT PERSECUTION,  
MISUNDERSTANDING OR OPPOSITION?

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Then you need to take heed to -

**John 16:32** - *Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.*

Many people have accepted Christ and have then had to face the misunderstanding and opposition of loved ones and friends. The test has been so severe that later they have become discouraged and have "given everything up".

But, "it is hard to be a Christian". Our Lord expressly told us that it would be so.

**Matthew 5:11-12** - *Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.  
12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*

The Lord Jesus was threatened with stones.

**John 8:59** - *Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.*

They put a crown of thorns upon His head.

**John 19:1-3** - *Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him.  
2 And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe,  
3 And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands.*

They mocked Him.

**Luke 23:33-37** - *And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.*  
34 *Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.*  
35 *And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.*  
36 *And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar,*  
37 *And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.*

Then they crucified Him.

**John 19:16** - *Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away.*

Is it not a privilege to suffer with Him? Compare -

**Philippians 1:29** - *For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;*

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

**2 Corinthians 11:23-30** - *Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.*

24 *Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.*

25 *Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;*

26 *In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;*

27 *In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.*

28 *Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.*

29 *Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?*

30 *If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.*

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### **3. WHAT HINDERED YOU? WAS IT SOME SEVERE TRIAL OR SORROW?**

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Then you need to take heed to -

**Hebrews 12:6** - *For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

The first thing the Lord does when we tell Him that we are willing to be wholly His, is to

test us out to see if we really mean it.

All the way through our earthly pilgrimage He is chastening us, “child training” us. He allows testings and trials to beset us so -

that we may be cast upon Him -

**Psalm 55:22** - *Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.*

that we may be refined -

**Malachi 3:3** - *And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.*

that our faith may be deepened -

**1 Peter 1:7** - *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:*

Have you ever noticed -

**Luke 7:23** - *And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.*

**Luke 7:19-22** - *And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?*

*20 When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?*

*21 And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight.*

*22 Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.*

Compare with -

**1 Peter 2:8** - *And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.*

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#### 4. WHAT HINDERED YOU? WAS IT THE PULL OF THE WORLD?

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Then you need to take heed to -

**1 John 2:15** - *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

It is not possible to love the Lord Jesus and to love the world at the same time.

**Matthew 6:24** - *No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*

That was the trouble with Demas -

**2 Timothy 4:10** - *For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.*

He was hindered by a love for the world.

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5. WHAT HINDERED YOU? WAS IT NEGLECT OF FELLOWSHIP WITH THE LORD?

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Then you need to take heed to -

**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.*

To “abide” means to “stay put”. Many Christians once were abiding in Christ have backslidden because they have neglected private prayer -

**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.*

and regular attendance at the house of God -

**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.*

In consequence, they have not grown and progressed spiritually -

**2 Corinthians 3:18** - *But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

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6. WHAT HINDERED YOU? WAS IT SOME WILFUL DISOBEDIENCE?

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Then you need to take heed to -

**Jeremiah 26:13** - *Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and the LORD will repent him of the evil that he hath*

*pronounced against you.*

It is of little use to think, to talk or even to pray about it unless you actually “amend your ways....and obey the voice of the Lord”. In other words, there must be some drastic dealing with anything and everything that is wrong in the life.

Is there a wrong friendship?

**Amos 3:3** - *Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*

Is there an unequal yoke?

**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?*

Is there a secret sin?

**Joshua 7:18-23** - *And he brought his household man by man; and Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken.*

*19 And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me.*

*20 And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done:*

*21 When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.*

*22 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it.*

*23 And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD.*

Is there some impurity?

**Isaiah 52:11** - *Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD.*

Is there an unforgiving spirit?

**Matthew 18:21-22** - *Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?*

*22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.*

Is there an unfulfilled vow?

**Deuteronomy 23:21** - *When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee.*

**22** *But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee.*

Read and compare -

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

**Psalms 66:18** - *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:*

Notice the reference to obedience in our key verse.

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7. WHAT HINDERED YOU? WAS IT SOMETHING ELSE.....?

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Then you need to take heed to -

**Hebrews 12:25** - *See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven:*

If you are willing and honest before the Lord and you long to come back to Him, He will put His finger upon the hindering thing in your life. When He does so, obey the injunction of -

**John 2:5** - *His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.*

What hindered you? The only life that is glorifying to God, pleasing to others and really satisfying to ourselves is the life that is lived in complete obedience to the truth - to the Lord Jesus who is the truth -

**John 14:6** - *If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*

and to His Word, the word of truth -

**2 Timothy 2:15** - *Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

From the converts in Uganda  
Comes to us a story grander  
In the lesson that it teaches,  
Then a sermon often preaches.

If they hear the evil tidings,  
That a brother is backsliding,  
And that some are even saying,  
“He no longer cares for praying”,

For they tell what sore temptations  
Come to them; what need of patience,  
And a need, all else outweighing,  
Of a place for private praying,

Then they say to one another,  
Very soft and gently, “Brother  
You’ll forgive us now for showing  
On your path the grass is growing.”

So each convert chose a corner  
Far away from eye of scorner,

And the erring one, relenting,  
Soon is bitterly repenting:

Pray to God in solitude.

On my path the grass is growing.

And so often went he thither,  
That the grass would fade and wither  
Where he trod, and you could trace  
By the paths, each prayer place.

But it shall be so no longer;  
I need to make me stronger;  
On my path so oft I’m going,  
Soon no grass will there be growing.”

(From “Springs In The Valley”)

# ***FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT***

## **STUDY 9**

**Scripture Portion: Acts 13:52**

**Acts 13:52** - *And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.*

There is no greater need in the life of a Christian than that there should be a full understanding of the New Testament teaching about the Spirit-filled life.

Because this subject is so neglected and so little understood, many Christians are living on a very low level of Christian experience. Their lives are powerless, defeated and joyless. Their service is ineffective and non-productive, or of little real fruit.

For the same reason, many of our churches are struggling. The forces of darkness seem to be gaining ground on every hand. The greatest need of every Christian is to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

In this study we will consider some vital aspects of this important truth.

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1. NOTICE FIRST THAT OUR KEY VERSE TELLS US SEVERAL IMPORTANT THINGS ABOUT THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE.

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Being filled with the Holy Spirit is a very definite experience.

**Acts 13:52** - *And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.*

There was nothing indefinite or uncertain about it. They were filled! The experience of the infilling of the Holy Spirit is so definite that we may know whether or not we have received it and whether or not we are living in the enjoyment of it.

This is by no means the only reference in the **Book of Acts** to Christians being filled with the Holy Spirit. Compare the following -

**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 6:3-5** - *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.*

*4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.*



*5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch.*

**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 11:24** - *For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.*

Now, look up God's command in -

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

Are you obeying that command?

Being filled with the Holy Spirit is more than being indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

These disciples in **Acts 13:52** were indwelt by the Holy Spirit. More than that, they were filled with the Spirit.

Every Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. It is not possible to be a Christian and not to have Him. Compare -

**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.*

**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?*

When we are 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.*

the Holy Spirit comes in to abide for ever -

**John 14:16** - *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.*

But it is one thing to have the Holy Spirit residing within us. It is another thing to have Him presiding within us. A vessel may contain a substance and yet not be filled. In like manner, though a Christian has the Holy Spirit, it does not follow that He fills his heart and life.

The fullness of the Holy Spirit is God's plan and provision for every one of His children.

In **Acts 13:52**, note that "the disciples.....were filled with the Holy Ghost" - that is, the rank and file members of the Church.

The Holy Spirit's fullness is not only for leaders, ministers, evangelists or any "spiritual aristocracy". It is for every child of God. Notice the word "all" 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.*

Compare -

**Acts 2:39** - *For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*

The Spirit-filled life is not meant to be an abnormal experience. In the purpose of God, it is to be the normal experience of every Christian. The fullness of the Spirit is God's provision for you!

**d. *By implication, to be filled with the Spirit means to be emptied of all that is contrary to His presence.***

He is the Holy Spirit. If He is to fill the temple of our personality, other things which have previously filled us must first be removed.

**Acts 13:10** - *And said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?*

We read here of one who was "full of all subtilty and all mischief". In -

**Acts 13:45** - *But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.*

we read of others who were "filled with envy". In -

**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?*

Peter told Ananias that it was because Satan had "filled" his heart that he had lied to the Holy Ghost.

What is filling us? For the Holy Spirit can never fill us if jealousy, criticism or any other unholy spirit is possessing us. We must give heed to -

**2 Corinthians 7:1** - *Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

**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.*

We must be cleansed on the ground of -

**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.*

if we are to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

5. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, certain things will happen.

There will be some evidence of His infilling. In -

**Acts 13:52** - *And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.*

the particular mark, or characteristic, of His infilling was that of joy. But let us notice some other marks also.

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## ***2. NOTICE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A SPIRIT-FILLED CHRISTIAN.***

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1. The first characteristic of the Spirit-filled life is power and effectiveness in witnessing.

The primary purpose of the infilling of the Holy Spirit is to make us effective witnesses.

**Acts 13:44-52** - *And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.*

*45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.*

*46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.*

*47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.*

*48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.*

*49 And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.*

*50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the*

*city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.*

*51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.*

*52 And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.*

Notice how mightily God's Spirit-filled servants witnessed for Him.

*There was power and attractiveness in their testifying.*

**Acts 13:44** - *And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.*

**(1) They made much of the Word of God.**

**Acts 13:44** - *And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.*

**Acts 13:46** - *Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.*

**Acts 13:48-49** - *And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.*

*49 And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.*

**(2) They were bold and fearless in face of bitter opposition.**

**Acts 13:45-46** - *But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.*  
*46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.*

**Acts 13:50** - *But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.*

**(3) God honoured their preaching with conversions.**

**Acts 13:48** - *And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.*

**(4) They completely obeyed the command of -**

**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 always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

**Acts 13:49** - *And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.*

The first characteristic of a Spirit-filled Christian, then, is that he is a witnessing Christian.

**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.*

2. The second characteristic of the Spirit-filled life is discernment, a Spirit-taught understanding of God's plan and program.

This is brought out clearly in this portion of scripture in two ways.

- (1) **Paul and Barnabas explained that the gospel was first given to the Jews, and then, when rejected by them, it was given to the Gentiles.**

**Acts 13:46-47** - *Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.*

*47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.*

Thus, they understood God's dispensational plan. Compare -

**Matthew 15:24** - *But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

**Luke 2:32** - *A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.*

**(2) They acted in complete obedience to the Word of the Lord.**

**Acts 13:51** - *But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.*

**Luke 10:10-11** - *But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say,  
11 Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.*

Notice in -

**1 Corinthians 2:14** - *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

that it is quite impossible for an unregenerate person to understand the things of the Spirit. Remember that the measure in which anyone will understand the things of the Spirit is dependent upon the measure in which he is possessed, or filled, by the Holy Spirit Himself.

**c. *The third characteristic of the Spirit-filled life is a manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit.***

**In Acts 13:52** - *And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.*

the particular manifestation was that of joy. But by reference to -

**Galatians 5:22-23** - *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,  
23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

we discover what is the fruit of the Spirit. The whole of this cluster of fruit will characterize the life of the Christian who is truly filled with the Holy Spirit.

We all need to be filled with the Holy Spirit - to make us really effective witnesses for our Lord, to impart to us discernment and spiritual understanding, and, above all, to make us more like the Lord Jesus!

# ***GIVING HIM THE FOREMOST PLACE***

## **STUDY 10**

**Scripture Portion: Colossians 1:18**

**Colossians 1:18** - *And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.*

The day is coming when the Lord Jesus Christ will have the pre-eminence, when He will be Lord and when -

**Philippians 2:10** - *That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;*

What a glorious prospect this is for Him - and for us!

“Jesus shall reign where'er the sun  
Doth his successive journeys run;  
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,  
'Till moons shall wax and wane no more.”

But, though the prophetic application of these words is important, there is an equally important personal application. The word “pre-eminent” means “occupying the foremost place”.

Here we are not thinking of the pre-eminence of one doctrine over another, one creed over another or one denomination over another, but of one personality over another.

The one personality is the Lord Jesus Christ and the other is you - or me. So, when we speak of the pre-eminence of Christ, we mean Christ's occupying the foremost place in our life. Does He? Is He first in our life, home, business, friendships, pleasures.....?

Read the warning of -

**3 John 9** - *I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.*

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**THE LORD JESUS CHRIST ALONE HAS THE RIGHT OF OCCUPYING THE FOREMOST PLACE IN HUMAN EXPERIENCE.**

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There is only one person in the whole of God's universe who has the absolute right to occupy the first place in your life and mine. Others may try to take the first place, but it is not their right to seek or to obtain it. If they do so, they are usurpers of the rightful place of Another.

The devil seeks the pre-eminence in our life, but it is not his right to have it.

There are three reasons why the Lord Jesus Christ alone has the right of being first in our life.

**a. *Because He made us.***

**Colossians 1:16** - *For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:*

Particularly notice that we were not only created “by Him” but also “for Him”.

Compare-

**Proverbs 16:4** - *The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.*

**Isaiah 43:7** - *Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.*

He made us in order that He might be first in our hearts and lives.

**b. *Because He has redeemed us.***

**Colossians 1:13-14** - *Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:*

*14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:*

We belong to Him by legal right, for He has purchased us with His own life’s blood.

Compare -

**1 Corinthians 6:20** - *For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

**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:*

Through His infinite sacrifice upon Calvary’s cross, and by the mighty power of His resurrection, God has -

**Colossians 1:13** - *.....delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:*



A kingdom must have a king. Once we were in Satan's kingdom. He was our king. Now we are in Christ's kingdom and it is His right to reign over us.

Do you acknowledge Him as King of your life?

**c. *Because God has given Him the pre-eminence.***

**Colossians 1:18** - *And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.*

tells us this. So do -

**Ephesians 1:20-23** - *Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,*

*21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:*

*22 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.*

**Philippians 2:9-11** - *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:*

*10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;*

*11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Compare -

**John 5:23** - *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.*

Then notice in -

**Colossians 1:15-20** - *Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:*

*16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:*

*17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.*

*18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.*

*19 For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;*

*20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.*

*that God has given the Lord Jesus the pre-eminence -*

**(1) in likeness -**

**Colossians 1:15** - *Who is the image of the invisible God.....*

**(2) in authority -**

**Colossians 1:15** - *.....the firstborn of every creature:*

**(3) in creation -**

**Colossians 1:16** - *For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:*

**(4) in eternity -**

**Colossians 1:17** - *And he is before all things,.....*

**(5) in power -**

**Colossians 1:17** - *.....and by him all things consist.*

**(6) in the Church -**

**Colossians 1:18** - *And he is the head of the body, the church:*

**(7) in the new creation -**

**Colossians 1:18** - *.....who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.*

**(8) in riches -**

**Colossians 1:19** - *For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;*

**(9) in final victory -**

**Colossians 1:20** - *And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.*

Now read **Matthew 12** and see that our Lord declares His pre-eminence when He says that he is greater than -

the temple -

**Matthew 12:6** - *But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple.*

the Sabbath -

**Matthew 12:8** - *For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.*

the devil -

**Matthew 12:29** - *Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.*

Jonah -

**Matthew 12:41** - *The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.*

and Solomon -

**Matthew 12:42** - *The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.*

He is greater than them all!

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ALTHOUGH IT IS HIS RIGHT TO OCCUPY THE FOREMOST PLACE IN HUMAN EXPERIENCE, HE DOES NOT ALWAYS DO SO.

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He is not always free to exercise His right. For example: in our life, very often self is first.

**Luke 9:59** - *And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.*

**Luke 9:61** - *And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.*

Notice the words “me first”! Compare -

**3 John 9** - *I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.*

Sometimes another life is first.

**Matthew 10:38** - *And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.*

Sometimes personal ambition, pleasure or possessions come first.

**Luke 18:23** - *And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.*

How true it is that -

The better often is the foe  
That keeps us from God's best!

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### ***3. THE LORD JESUS MAY BE PRESENT IN OUR LIFE, YET NOT BE PRE-EMINENT.***

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If you are a Christian, He is truly present - but is He pre-eminent? It is true to say that He is present in our national, political, commercial and religious life, but He is not, by any means, pre-eminent. The same may be true in your life or mine.

“If He is not Lord of all, then He is not Lord at all!”

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#### **4. THE LORD JESUS MAY BE PROMINENT, BUT NOT PRE-EMINENT.**

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That is, He may hold a very large and important place in our life and yet not hold *the* place in our life. Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart and show you whether He is truly pre-eminent - or only prominent.

**Psalm 139:23-24** - *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:*

*24 And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

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5. WHEN THE LORD JESUS DOES OCCUPY THE FOREMOST PLACE IN A HUMAN LIFE, THE FOLLOWING THREE THINGS ARE TRUE.

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There is supreme love of His Person.

We love Him more than any other person or thing, more than His service, our loved ones, ourselves.

**John 21:15** - “.....*more than these.....?*”

***b. There is unquestioning obedience to His commands.***

Compare -

**John 14:15** - *If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

**John 2:5** - *His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.*

**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.*

3. There is complete submission to His will.

When the Lord Jesus occupies the foremost place in my life, I shall be willing to serve Him in the sphere of His choice, to suffer, should He will it, and, if necessary, to die for Him. Indeed, my attitude will be -

**Matthew 11:26** - *Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.*