

Living in the Sunshine

Studies 1 - 12

TEACHER MANUAL

Stephen Nemeth Lectures

LIVING IN THE SUNSHINE

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LIVING IN THE SUNSHINE

STUDY 1

Scripture Portion: Jude 20-23

Jude 20-23 - *But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,*

21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

22 And of some have compassion, making a difference:

23 And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

It is always a tremendous help to me when I am studying any section of scripture to look for the key word, phrase or sentence in that particular passage. When I have found this “key,” the whole portion begins to open up.

In these four verses, I believe the key phrase is in the exhortation at the beginning of -

Jude 21 - *Keep yourselves in the love of God,.....*

or, as I would like to paraphrase these words: “live in the sunshine.”

Here is something that is required of us, for these words are an exhortation. They tell us we are to do something.

What are we to do?

We who have come into an experience of salvation and who belong to the Lord -

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

are to love the Lord our God -

Matthew 22:37 - *Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*

But Jude is not speaking here of our love to God, though he includes that. He is speaking of God’s wonderful love to and for us.

When the writer of this short epistle says, “Keep yourselves in the love of God,” he means

to live day by day in the sunshine of God's love.

Beware of getting into any self-made shadows of sin, or disobedience, or doubt, or fear. Avoid every dark cloud which would spoil your fellowship with and your enjoyment of the Lord Himself.

Live in the sunshine, or, in the words of John Keble, "Let no earthborn cloud arise to hide Thee from Thy servant's eyes."

But this is impossible! No one can always live in the sunshine!

Oh yes they can. I want you to notice that the exhortation to keep yourselves in the love of God is sandwiched between two other "keepings."

As believers, we are -

Jude 1 -*preserved* (or kept) *in Jesus Christ, and called:*

We read again that the Lord is our Keeper for -

Jude 24 -*Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,*

So the Lord begins by keeping us and ends by keeping us. In between, we, in dependence upon Him and because of His keeping power, are to keep ourselves always in His love. We are to live in the sunshine.

How are we to do this?

Jude tells us that, if we would live in the sunshine, we must do some -

Building Praying Looking Pulling and Hating.

Let us consider these verses and notice this fivefold requirement.

BUILDING.

Jude 20 -*building up yourselves on your most holy faith,.....*

What does this mean? How are we to build ourselves up on our most holy faith? Why should we do it?

The answer is found in -

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.*

This means, do not remain in a state of spiritual immaturity! It is a very lovely thing to be a baby in God's family, but it is sad beyond words, when a Christian "baby" remains in a state of spiritual infancy and does not pass through the stages of childhood to adulthood.

One of the greatest and saddest problems in the church today is that so many Christians are immature. They have never grown up.

The metaphor which Jude uses when he says, "*building up yourselves on your most holy faith,*" may refer to the gradual rearing up of a building until it is completed. This is how we are to view the Christian life.

The process may be slow, as stone by stone is added, but the object is to produce a building which is complete and worthy of the Lord.

There are many ways in which we become strong spiritually. But the chief way is by reading, meditating on and living in obedience to the Word of God.

Build your whole life upon the Bible and you will become a spiritual giant.

Build your friendships, your marriage, your business - build everything upon the Word of God and you will become -

Ephesians 6:10 - *.....be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*

You will know what it is to live in the sunshine.

This, then, is the first thing we must do. We must set out to become spiritually mature.

I sometimes wish I could go back to the beginning of my Christian life and start all over again. I know that, were I able to do so, I would spend much more time in the study of God's Word in order that I might grow spiritually strong.

Many Christians feel like this. It is a healthy feeling really.

But to young people especially I would say, "Begin *now* to study God's Word, while you have the opportunity, so that, as you get on into life, you will become a strong Christian."

"Set out to become spiritually mature and you will live in the sunshine."

PRAYING.

Jude 20 -*praying in the Holy Ghost,*

In other words, maintain constant contact with the throne of God.

There are two kinds of prayers which it is possible for us to offer. The first is the utterance of our own petulant desires. Just our own wishes and wants - words, words, words! This is not real prayer at all.

But there is that prayer which is a burden the Holy Spirit places within us. James speaks about this in -

James 5:16 -*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

or “the Spirit-inwrought prayer of a man made righteous availeth much.”

True prayer is wrought in us by the Holy Spirit. When it finds expression, it goes right to the throne of God. This is “praying in the Holy Ghost.”

The Christian who knows how to pray in the Holy Ghost is the Christian who is in touch with the throne of God and with God who is upon the throne.

There is nothing more important than this for the child of God. We must, at all costs, cultivate daily, regular and uninterrupted fellowship with the Lord Himself.

Whatever we may be doing, whether we are working or relaxing, the most important thing for us is that we maintain constant communion with God Himself. To enjoy this fellowship with Him is to live in the sunshine.

A few years ago, when a criminal was on the run from the police, he had a good chance of escape. Even if he were spotted by a policeman on patrol, if he was quick enough, he could make his getaway.

Then came the day when, unfortunately for the criminal, our policemen were issued with personal radios which enabled them to make immediate contact with police headquarters. This meant that each man, by pressing a switch on his radio, could at once report any incident and ask for instructions.

The important thing, of course, was that his apparatus should not only be in proper working order, but that it should be switched on at the right time.

This is the qualifying thing in prayer.

God has given us a “personal radio.”

The wonderful thing is that, wherever we are, we can lift up our hearts to Him and talk to Him.

But, if we are to live in moment by moment contact with the throne, our praying must be “in the Holy Ghost.” Our spiritual “personal radio” must be in working order. It must be switched on.

This simply means that, as we lift up our hearts and look up to the Lord, the Holy Spirit works His gracious ministry within us and enables us to keep in touch and be on happy speaking terms with the Lord Himself.

We cannot do this without the Holy Spirit’s help. His aid is available at all times, for -

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.

Spiritual history is the record of God’s working in answer to the prayers of His people who are “praying in the Holy Ghost.”

If anything at all is accomplished for the kingdom of God, it is because prayer, prompted by the Holy Spirit, has been offered to God.

God’s history is being written as His people pray. In this holy exercise there is no age barrier, no social barrier, no language barrier, no geographical barrier. Anyone can pray anywhere!

If we cultivate this constant contact with the throne, we will find that God will hear and answer our prayers and crown our lives with blessing. We will be living in the sunshine.

LOOKING.

Jude 21 - *.....looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. unto eternal life*

In other words, live in anticipation of the Lord’s return.

It may sound startling, but I believe it is true to say that not many of us who profess to be Christians really do this.

When you got up this morning, did you say, “The Lord may come today. This may be my last day on earth.”

Of course we believe because His personal return is promised in both the Old and the New Testaments so many times.

Here in this short epistle of Jude, there are several references to the second coming of

Christ. Indeed, the whole letter is written against the background of the truth of the imminent personal return of the Saviour.

Then, we have Jesus' own promise that He will return for He said -

John 14:3 - *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

We also have the testimony of the two men who appeared at Olivet when our Lord ascended into heaven, and who assured the watching disciples that -

Acts 1:11 - *Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.*

Added to this, we have the testimony of the apostles. In the New Testament epistles, this truth is brought to the forefront time and time again.

But do we really live in daily anticipation of the Lord's return?

When we are expecting special visitors to stay with us in our home, we usually have a minor spring-clean.

Why?

Because someone special is coming and we want everything to be right for their pleasure and comfort.

We need more than a minor spring-clean when the Someone we are expecting is the Lord Himself.

If we had been living in anticipation of the Lord's return, would we have written that letter or spoken that hasty word? Would we have stood up for 'our rights' in the way we did?

1 John 3:3 - *And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*

This simply means that, if we really live in the light of the Lord's coming, we will be careful how we live.

"But," you say, "is not this business of living in the sunshine a selfish matter?"

No!

1 John 3:22-23 - *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.*

23 *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.*

4. COMPASSION.

Jude 22-23 -*And of some have compassion, making a difference:*

23 *And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire;.....*

In other words, rescue the perishing.

If we are living in the sunshine, basking in the love of God, we will want to get others out of the dark shadows and into the sunshine. Only as we do this, will we continue to live in the sunshine ourselves.

Notice in these two verses that three qualifications for rescue work are mentioned.

Compassion.

When our Lord Jesus -

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

Pause and ask yourself this question, “Have I any real love for those who are “scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd? Do I pass them by on the other side, as the priest and Levite did, or do I get down by their side and seek to minister to them as the good Samaritan did?” **Luke 10:25-37.**

b. Discrimination.

We must have spiritual discernment, wisdom and tact. Jude says that we have to make a difference in our approach to souls. Some are saved by the “fear” method, some by the “love” method.

How important it is to be guided by the Holy Spirit so that we are wise in the way we approach men and women concerning their spiritual needs.

It was not wise or tactful of the Christian worker who went to a well bred, well-dressed lady and handed her a tract entitled, “Are you a drunkard?”

3. Urgency.

Jude says that we are to pull men and women out of the fire.

This suggests that soul winning is a terribly urgent matter for, whereas there is a

wonderful heaven to gain, there is a terrible hell from which souls need to be saved.

If we would live in the sunshine, we must share the burden of the apostle Paul, who was able to say -

1 Corinthians 9:16 - *For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!*

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.*

5. HATING.

Jude 23 - *.....hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.*

Suppose that, as you picked up a coat and were about to put it on, someone said, “Stop! Did you not know that the man who has been wearing that coat has smallpox?”

How horrified you would be! You would tear it off immediately.

Now, answer this question: Does sin horrify you like that? Do the things you hear, see or think of, which are polluted, unclean or doubtful, do they horrify you?

Have you a conscience which is so quickened that you feel the loathsomeness of sin? Have you a holy hatred of sin?

Some years ago there lived in New York a man of God by the name of Dr. Maltbie Babcock. On one occasion he was offered a cigar at a luncheon.

He thanked his host and then said, “You know, in my particular work, I have to be very careful. It would not do for me to go about speaking of Christ and His love with the smell of tobacco in my clothes and on my breath.”

“Later today I might have to go and see a dying man. It would not do for me to smell of tobacco as I speak to him about his eternal destiny.”

“Thank you for your kindness, but I am sure you will understand if I do not accept the cigar.”

He was hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

The apostle Paul had something to say about this. Having spoken about the necessity for God's people to live lives which are separated from sinful and doubtful things and associations, he said -

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.*

Only by taking deliberate and decisive action in this way and in this respect shall we now what it is to live in the sunshine.

On one occasion, as I was talking to my friend, Percy Ruoff, he said, "I have just made a most useful purchase. I am so pleased with it."

"I have brought a summer house which operates on a swivel. When the sun is shining, whatever time of day it is, I can turn the summer house so that I am always sitting in the sunshine."

Here we have the secret of what it means to keep ourselves in the love of God.

In order to do it, we must set out to become spiritually mature. We must maintain constant contact with the throne. We must live in anticipation of the Lord's return. We must rescue the perishing.

We must develop a holy hatred of sin in every shape and form.

What a grand thing it would be if we started now to keep ourselves in the love of God!

Then, in the words of F. W. Faber: "Our lives would be all sunshine in the sweetness of the Lord!"

THE POWER OF A PRAYING CHURCH

STUDY 2

Scripture Portion: Acts 4:23-24

Acts 4:23-24 - *And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.*

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

The power of a praying church.

Have you ever seen God's power released in and through a church, a local assembly of His people? If so, that church must have been a praying church for the power of God operates only through a praying church.

In these scriptures, we have the account of a church at prayer. It is important to read these verses again. What thrilling reading they make!

What wonderful things would happen if prayer meetings like this were held today whenever and wherever Christians meet together to worship the Lord! For it is just as important today for a church to pray.

Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that the greatest need in the church of God at this time is for a new emphasis upon and a new entering into the experience of corporate praying. Many of us have fallen down by failing to make use of the prayer meeting.

We are living in very difficult times. Things have always been difficult for the Christian and for the church. Problems have always faced the people of God. Indeed, in many respects, they were infinitely greater in past days than anything most of us have experienced in our lifetime.

What is the fundamental problem in our churches?

How do we answer this?

It is, of course, the problem of getting the gospel to the outsider and finding right leaders for the various activities in our churches.

There is the ever-recurring problem of finance.

There is the problem created by the lack of love and unity which so often prevails among Christians.

And so we might go on. There are problems galore. But all these only touch the circumference of the situation.

The real problem is the prayer life of the church. If that is solved, every other problem will at once find a solution. Difficulties soon disappear and obstacles are removed when the prayer life of the church is powerful and effective.

In a word, a praying church quickly becomes a revived church for prayer is the very life of the church, of its worship and of its various activities. So there is really only one problem in every church. That is to get the members of it together upon their knees.

Ever since God breathed life into our first father, Adam, man has been breathing air into his system.

Genesis 2:7 - *And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.*

Air is chiefly composed of oxygen and nitrogen, but it is only in the past comparatively few years that oxygen has been isolated from the atmosphere and has been used to save life.

The human body cannot live without the intake of oxygen. Often in cases where a patient has difficulty breathing, oxygen is administered, a result of which his heart and lungs are able to function until the emergency has passed.

The important thing, however, is that during the emergency the supply of oxygen is kept going. If this is cut off too soon the patient may be in serious trouble and very near death.

So it is with the church. Many churches are listless. It is often said of them that they are "dead."

What do we mean when we say that a church is dead?

We mean that there are few signs of spiritual life. There is little evidence of vitality and little manifestation of the presence and power of God.

The members are spiritually listless because they are failing to breathe in the immense reserves of spiritual grace and power which God has made available to His people. Consequently, the church seems to be "dead."

These people lack God's "oxygen" and have little "air" to keep them alive. Reverently, we would remind ourselves that the Christians "air" is the Holy Spirit, Who indwells him and waits to fill him with a new life.

This is why every church needs, above everything else, to be a praying church. For if a church does not pray, although the activities of that church may be carried on, the members may attend the services and the work many continue with enthusiasm, there will be no spiritual results.

There will be no Holy Spirit fruit.

These things will only come to pass when the church gets down on her knees and waits upon the Lord to pour out the blessing which He promises to pour out in answer to prayer.

This is all very challenging. It leads us to ask, “What are the marks of a praying church?”

We see some of the answers to this question in **Acts. 4:23-27**.

IN A PRAYING CHURCH, THERE IS A RECOGNITION OF THE SUPREME IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER.

There is, therefore, a spontaneous desire to pray.

Peter and John had been in prison because of their loyalty to the Lord and their determination to preach the gospel. Then they were set free. Immediately they hastened to join the company of Christians in Jerusalem in order to let them know all that had been happening to them.

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

When the Christians heard their report, what did they do?

Immediately -

Acts 4:24 - *And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:*

They recognized the supreme importance of prayer. They were filled with a spontaneous desire to join their praises and petitions at the throne of grace.

It is little wonder that the worldling does not believe that our God answers prayer, when so many Christians have very little real appreciation of the importance of prayer and so little desire for the place of prayer.

It is only when the people of God join together in earnest, persistent, believing prayer that a channel is opened through which the power and blessing of God will flow for the

fulfillment of His gracious will.

IN A PRAYING CHURCH, THE EYES OF FAITH AND EXPECTANCY ARE
TOWARD THE LORD.

It is lovely to notice that these Christians at once -

Acts 4:24 - *.....lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:*

In other words, they turned their eyes away from man, from the problems on hand and turned to the Lord Who can solve every problem and Who is always in control of every situation.

They were right in line with the psalmist who said -

Psalms 62:5 - *My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him.*

After all, whatever problems face us, it is God's will for us which matters, not the authorities, not problems relating to our churches, or any of these other things.

The only thing which matters is our fellowship with God, our being in touch with Him, our seeking and finding His will for us, and our being available to Him for Him to come down in power and to work in and through us.

The outlook may be very bad, but it is the uplook which counts. If that sounds trite, it is, nevertheless, true.

Notice that the eyes of a praying church are upon God who is:

The Sovereign Lord.

Acts 4:24 - *And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:*

Acts 4:28 - *For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.*

b. The Self-revealing Lord.

When they prayed, they quoted from the Old Testament scriptures and reminded themselves of all that God had promised to do and how God had acted. **Acts 4:25** - *Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?*

Their dependence upon, and belief in, all that God had revealed of Himself through the prophets, and primarily in His Son, is recorded in -

Acts 4:26-27 - *The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.*

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

3. The Seeing God.

As these Christians prayed, they said -

Acts 4:29 - *And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,*

These Jerusalem Christians were not looking at their problems, at the power of the authorities, or at the possibility that Peter and John might be returned to prison.

They lifted up their voices to God and waited for Him to do something. They expected that He would do something!

What a difference it would make in our churches if, when difficulties arise, we would get down on our knees together and wait before the Lord, as these early Christians did, until He answered our prayers!

**IN A PRAYING CHURCH, THERE IS AN OVERWHELMING DESIRE TO OBEY
THE LORD'S COMMISSION TO EVANGELIZE THE WORLD.**

The most challenging verse in this portion is -

Acts 4:29 - *And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,*

As they praised God that He had brought about the release of Peter and John, the burden of their prayer did not become a plea that He would keep them safe.

Instead, they pleaded with the Lord that He would enable them to go on proclaiming the gospel with greater courage.

They did not pray, “Lord, don’t let it happen again.” They prayed -

Acts 4:29 -*grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,*

In a praying church, the members will be burdened with the need to make Christ known to a lost and dying world. The one thing which will matter to them, above everything else, will be the salvation of sinners.

Does this mark, the passionate concern for the salvation of the lost, characterize the church of which we are members?

Is a constant effort being made, not only to organize, but to evangelize, not to denominationalize but to get souls brought out of spiritual darkness into the marvelous light of the gospel and into the fellowship of God’s dear Son?

In a praying church, there will be burdened hearts, burdened soul winners, burdened sowers and burdened reapers. The members will have a passion for souls and an earnest longing to make Christ known.

IN A PRAYING CHURCH, THERE IS FAITH TO DEMAND MIRACLES (Prayer and Faith Demand Miracles).

In the scriptures, wherever we read of prayer being offered, we also read of God stepping in in miracle-working power, for is it not true to say that every answer to prayer is a miracle of God’s working?

When the members of any church really pray, God always breaks in with supernatural acts.

He did this in the Jerusalem church at the time of which we are speaking, for we read that they prayed that God would intervene -

Acts 4:30 - *By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.*

Was their prayer answered?

I’ll say it was - and, if anyone says that the days of miracles are past, I challenge that!

In the gospels and in Acts, we are told that signs and wonders were witnessed, resulting from, and in connection with, the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ and during the apostolic period. These were, in a very real sense, evidential signs, credentials of the fact that our Lord was the Messiah, and that the apostles were His true servants.

Having said this, we must also say that, true as it is that there were special miracles in those days to substantiate the claims of our Lord and of His first followers, it is also true to say that, if the church today were on her knees and praying to the Lord, as these Christians were, undoubtedly the Holy Spirit would put forth His power in marvelous ways of which many of us know little or nothing.

When the church prays, miracles really do take place, miracles in the spiritual realm as men and women are convicted, converted and gathered into the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, and desperate cases, such as deep-dyed sinners, are wrought upon and brought into the family of God.

It is true also in the physical realm.

When the church really knows how to pray, God is often pleased to grant healing to the bodies and minds of His children.

Do you doubt this?

Genesis 18:14 - *Is any thing too hard for the LORD?.....*

Nothing is too hard for the Lord!

When the church knows how to pray, God always steps in and does great and mighty things.

IN A PRAYING CHURCH, THE HOLY SPIRIT IS HONORED AND MANIFESTS HIS PRESENCE AND POWER.

At the conclusion of this wonderful prayer meeting, Luke tells us that suddenly an amazing thing happened.

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

The explanation is as simple as this: prayer is the secret of every Pentecostal outpouring.

We are not now considering what happened on the Day of Pentecost. This account in **Acts 4** is of something which happened on another occasion, after Pentecost.

We are not told that the disciples were meeting together to pray specifically that they might be filled with the Holy Spirit.

What they did was to get on their knees and ask the Lord to help them to be obedient to His commission and to be pleasing to Him as they sought to make the Lord Jesus Christ known in the quickest possible way, to the largest number of people, with the greatest possible results.

As they prayed in this way suddenly...yes, suddenly -

Acts 4:31 -*they were all filled with the Holy Ghost,.....*

This can happen again, and again, and again.

Dispensationally, there will never be another Day of Pentecost, but there can be, there must be, a Pentecostal experience, in the lives of God's people and in the life of every church.

I have known occasions when the Holy Spirit has been wonderfully "outpoured" upon waiting companies of God's people. In every case, it happened as the result of their prayers.

Why are we so slow to realize the importance of the prayer meeting?

6. IN A PRAYING CHURCH, THERE IS MIGHTY POWER IN THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL.

Whenever the preaching of the gospel is accompanied by the prayer backing of the church, souls are brought under deep conviction of sin and are led to seek refuge in the Lord Jesus as their Saviour.

C. H. Spurgeon, one of the great preachers of the last century, experienced this time and time again. Each Sunday, prior to his entering the pulpit, hundreds of people met for prayer.

Is it any wonder that when he proclaimed the gospel men and women were stricken down by the power of God and multitudes were saved?

Behind his preaching was the vital intercession of his praying church.

In every case where great things have been accomplished through the preaching of the gospel, it has always been in answer to the prayers of God's people.

I have often had the joy of retiring to bed on a Thursday evening in the knowledge that something special and wonderful was going to happen on the following Sunday.

Why?

Because in our Thursday evening prayer meeting, the power of God had come down upon those who had met together to pray for the Sunday services.

I would go further and say that never once, on receiving this Thursday night assurance, have I failed to witness the Sunday blessing in the preaching of the Word and the salvation of souls.

Why do we place so little value on the prayer meeting?

Why do we so easily "give it a miss?"

7. IN A PRAYING CHURCH, THERE IS GREAT GRACE IN THE LIVES OF GOD'S PEOPLE.

Acts 4:33 - *And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.*

Great grace was upon them all.

As these people prayed, as they were filled with the Holy Spirit, the beauty of holiness rested upon them. This grace was seen in three ways.

1. There was the grace of unity.

Acts 4:32 - *And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.*

Because they prayed, they experienced the unity of the Spirit -

Ephesians 4:3 - *Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

They knew the meaning and the experience of oneness in the Lord Jesus.

Galatians 3:28 - *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*

2. There was the grace of renunciation.

Acts 4:32 -*And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul:.....*

What a marvelous inflowing and outflowing there was of the love of Christ! How greatly this is needed today!

How is it achieved?

It comes about as a direct result of the people of God learning to kneel down together and to pray together.

3. There was the grace of liberality.

Acts 4:32 -*neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.*

Acts 4:34 - *Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,*

These are some of the marks of a praying church.

But, a church is constituted of men and women who have been born of God's Spirit and baptized into the body of Christ.

A praying church, therefore, is a company of Christians who pray, who pray together, who pray as a church.

How important it is for all of us who "belong" to a local fellowship of God's people to see to it that, so far as we are concerned, we are doing our utmost to make our church a praying church!

We have yet to see what God will do when the church gets down on her knees and prays.

KNOWING GOD'S WILL WHEN WE PRAY

STUDY 3

Scripture Portion: 1 John 5:14-15

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

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

This surely is one of the most remarkable prayer-promises in the Bible. It tells us that it is possible for us to pray and not only to get the things we pray for, but to know beforehand that our prayers are heard and answered.

In one of my old Scofield Bibles, I have written in the margin against **verse 15** the words, "Got it!" This is exactly what this promise means.

If we know that God hears us in *whatsoever we ask, we know that we have* the answers to our prayers. In simple, down-to-earth terms this means, "Got it!"

This promise tells me that I can come to God and ask Him for certain things, that I can be absolutely sure that He will give me those things. I can say to myself, "Well, that's that! The Lord has heard my prayer and has answered it!"

Suppose there is some article I very much want to possess. I can telephone my local retailer, who knows me well and with whom I have a credit account. I can ask him to deliver that article.

If he has it in stock, he will say, "Thank you, the article is yours. You will receive it by the next delivery."

I then turn to my friends and say, "I have got that thing I told you about!"

They say, "Let us see it!" And I reply, "Well, it has not come yet, but it is mine. It is coming by the next delivery."

My friends then say, "Are you sure about it?" I answer, "Yes. I have ordered it. It is on the way to me now."

This is exactly what **1 John 5:14-15** says to us -

This is the confidence that we have in Him..... (the One Who knows us and knows what things we need,)

that if we ask..... (“telephone” to the One Who knows us,)

anything according to His will..... (that is, anything that He has in stock,)

He heareth us..... (that is, He accepts our order, our request,)

and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask..... (that is, if we know that He has accepted our “order,”))

we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him. (We know that the delivery will be made in due course.)

Now, as you look again at **1 John 5:14-15**, notice first that the promise is made to a particular class of people.

The first word of **1 John 5:14** - *and.....*

takes us back to -

1 John 5:13-14 - *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:*

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

So you see that the promise is made to those who believe on the Name of the Son of God. Therefore, they are those who have eternal life.

THE FIRST THING I WANT YOU TO NOTICE IS THAT THE PROMISE IS NOT MADE TO ANYBODY AND EVERYBODY.

It is made to Christians.

To return to the illustration. Before I could ring up the store and be absolutely sure that I was going to have delivery of the article I had ordered, I had to have an account with the firm. I had to be known by the storekeeper.

My order would not have been accepted otherwise, because the firm would have had no confidence in me.

This is one of the fundamental things about prayer.

Before we can come to God on “praying ground,” we must know Him as our Father through faith in His Son and He must know us as His children. We must have believed,

according to -

1 John 5:13 -on the name of the Son of God.

THE SECOND THING I WANT YOU TO NOTICE IS THAT THE PROMISE
REMINDS US THAT PRAYER IS NECESSARY FOR THE
ACCOMPLISHMENT OF GOD'S WILL.

This means that there are certain things which God does only when His people pray, and which He does not do when they do not pray.

It is not easy to understand or to explain the wonder or the mystery of all this, but it is, nevertheless, true.

In the illustration, the order had to be placed before the delivery could be made. The shopkeeper did not deliver his goods at random. He did not pass them over to those who had not asked for them.

No, the shopkeeper waited for the order to come in.

In the same way, there are certain things that God does only when we ask Him.

James says in his epistle -

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

In the Old Testament, God says that there are times when He will be "enquired of" -

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

This means that He is longing to answer our prayers, but He waits for us to come to Him so that the channel might be opened through which He can answer our prayers and pour out His blessings.

THE THIRD THING I WOULD LIKE YOU TO NOTICE IS THAT THIS PROMISE
MAKES CONFIDENCE IN PRAYER DEPENDENT UPON ASKING THAT
WHICH IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH GOD'S WILL.

The whole crux of the matter is pinpointed here. That thing for which I am asking - is it in accordance with God's will?

Obviously God will not answer prayer when it is contrary to His will. To do so would be inconsistent with His nature.

So, when we come to pray, we must be sure that what we ask for is His will for us.

THE FOURTH THING I WOULD LIKE YOU TO NOTICE IS THAT THIS PROMISE
IS GIVEN TO ENCOURAGE OUR ASKING, AND NOT TO HINDER IT.

Why do I say that?

I say it because it is easy to read a promise such as this and to say, “There is the snag! Our praying must be in accordance with God’s will and we cannot know His will!”

If we reason like this, then immediately we will begin to imagine that prayer is complicated and difficult.

Instead of exercising our faith in the promises of God and in God Himself to fulfil His promises, we will yield to doubts and fears and be tempted to give up praying.

But, God gives us this great promise, not to make prayer seem more difficult, but to spur us on to pray.

To pray *according to His will* should encourage us to ask more, not less.

If we ask for more, we will receive more.

5. THE FIFTH, AND THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO NOTICE IS THAT THIS PROMISE IMPLIES THAT WE MAY BE ABSOLUTELY SURE OF GOD’S WILL WHEN WE PRAY.

Read the verses again and notice that the whole implication and emphasis of the promise is that we may pray according to the will of God. When we know we are doing this, we may also be absolutely sure that our prayer will be answered.

1 John 5:14 begins with the words “*And this is the confidence that we have in Him.....*”

1 John 5:15 contains the two words “*we know.*”

So there is no room for doubt or for any lack of confidence and assurance that God will

hear our prayers when they are offered in accordance with His will.

In **John, chapter eleven**, we have the account of the death and the raising of Lazarus.

When Jesus arrived in Bethany, four days after His friend Lazarus had died, He spoke of raising back him to life. He gave orders for the stone to be removed from the cave where he was buried.

John 11:39 - *Jesus said, Take ye away the stone.....*

Martha hurriedly said -

John 11:39 - *.....by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.*

in effect, “But Lord, you can’t do anything about it now! Why, his body has begun to decompose. He has been dead for four days. Behold, he stinketh!”

How did Jesus reply? He looked up to His Father in heaven and said -

John 11:42 - *And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.*

It was as if He said, “I know without any shadow of doubt that You have heard and answered My prayer.”

How did the Saviour know this?

He knew it because He was praying in accordance with His Father’s will, which the Father had made known to Him.

You and I, too, can pray and be absolutely sure that we are praying according to the will of God. Because of this we can be sure that we will receive that for which we have asked.

Now, the vital question, of course, is this: If everything depends upon our praying in accordance with the will of God, how may we be sure of His will when we pray?

We may be sure of it in two ways.

1. GOD REVEALS HIS WILL TO US BY HIS WORD.

The will of God is revealed in the Word of God. Over and over again we find specific statements which tell us what God’s gracious will is.

For example:

We know it is God's will for our unconverted loved ones to be convicted of their sin and made to feel their need of the Saviour.

How do we know this?

We know it because of the words of Jesus Himself -

John 16:7-11 - *Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.*

8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

9 Of sin, because they believe not on me;

10 Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;

11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

Now link up those verses with **1 John 5:14-15**.

You will realize that you can pray with confidence that God will convict and convince those for whom you pray, of their desperate need of the Saviour.

And He will answer your prayer.

a. *We know that we are praying in line with God's will when we ask for the salvation of any man, woman or child on earth.*

Paul wrote to Timothy -

1 Timothy 2:1-4 - *I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;*

2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;

4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

Peter also expressed the same confidence when he wrote -

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

The loving heart of God yearns for the salvation of men and women. This is the meaning

of God's words, "Why will ye die.....?" in -

Ezekiel 33:11 - *Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*

Now link all these verses up with **1 John 5:14-15**. You will realize that you can confidently expect that God will save those loved ones for whose salvation you are praying.

We know that we are praying in line with God's will when we ask for the sanctification of His people.

The apostle Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica -

1 Thessalonians 4:3 - *For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:*

This is a prayer which we need to pray very carefully. Only after we have searched our own hearts, lest we should adopt a "holier than thou" attitude.

It is perfectly clear from many scriptures that God's will is that all who come to know Him as Saviour should follow on to know Him as Sanctifier, as Lord and Sovereign.

Now, link up this verse with **1 John 5:14-15**. You will realize that God has heard your prayer when you have prayed for the sanctification of His people.

d. We know that it is God's will to give us wisdom when we ask for it.

We know this because James was inspired to write -

James 1:5 - *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*

How we need wisdom!

But why should we ever lack wisdom when we have such a wonderful promise as this before us?

With this promise, we can, by faith, place our finger upon **1 John 5:14-15**, and pray with absolute confidence that God will give the wisdom we so much need.

3. We know it is God's will for us to pray for laborers to be thrust forth into the world's great harvest fields.

We know this because Jesus, Who was moved with compassion when He saw the multitudes, exhorted His disciples to pray -

Matthew 9:36-38 - *But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. 37 Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; 38 Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.*

So, when workers are needed, we can pray on the grounds of **1 John 5:14-15**, with absolute confidence that we are praying in the will of the Lord and in the knowledge that he will answer our prayers and send the laborers into His harvest.

Now, in all the illustrations we have thus far given, we have simply quoted promises of God contained in His Word which assure us concerning His will. We have looked at promises which He gives concerning specific ways in which He is willing to hear and answer our prayers.

Having said this, we are still faced with a problem which is that there are many matters about which we want to pray yet, in His Word, God does not give us any specific promise at all.

How should we pray with confidence that He will hear and answer us? How shall we know that we are praying aright?

Let me illustrate what I mean.

Here are two young Christians. They both really love the Lord and they love each other. But, is it God's will that they should get engaged with a view to marrying later on? Is there any specific verse in the Bible which says, "Frank, you must ask Mary to marry you. Mary, you must accept Frank's invitation to marry him?"

No. There is no specific scripture for this.

There are many scriptures which help and encourage Christians in daily living, but there is not an explicit promise in the Bible which can guide them in the matter of matrimony except that Christians must marry "only in the Lord."

1 Corinthians 7:39 - *The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.*

In other words, there are certain things concerning which, if we search our Bible, we do not find a definite word from the Lord assuring us of His will in these matters.

Let me give another illustration.

Here are two people who want to buy a house. Everything about it seems to be right.

They talk it over, seek all the advice they can get, then they say, "It seems all right. But is this God's will for us? Let us get the Bible and see what it says!"

Of course, there is no such promise in the Bible which can guide them to buy the house. What should they do?

What should we do with regard to such problems with which we are faced from time to time and concerning which we need to know God's will for us?

The answer is this: we may know God's will by His Word. We may also know His will by His Spirit and this is a most wonderful thing.

1. GOD REVEALS HIS WILL TO US BY HIS SPIRIT.

Let us revel in the wonderful words in -

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.

If we belong to the Lord, the Holy Spirit dwells within us. He is there to enable us to pray according to the will of God.

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.*

Now, concerning some of the matters about which we, as Christians, so frequently need to know the will of God, it comes as a great encouragement to us to realize that God has made provision for us with regard to these.

Because we do not know what God's will is, because "*we know not what we should pray for as we ought,*" what shall we do?

Paul tells us that, "*The Spirit.....maketh intercession for us (or in us) according to the will of God.*"

This is very wonderful! If we belong to the Lord, then the indwelling Holy Spirit exercises a ministry of intercession in us.

If we would pray effectively, then we must let the Holy Spirit pray through us.

This is one of His great and gracious ministries. When He prays through us, because He is God, then obviously and logically, the praying must be according to the will of God.

How does all this work out in practice? What is meant by the words in -

Romans 8:26 -*groanings which cannot be uttered.*

I believe they mean that, as we pray and yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit, He shows us the will of God. The request is born in us. We “pray in the Holy Ghost.”

Jude 20 -*praying in the Holy Ghost,*

Sometimes we cannot explain to anyone else how or why we are praying along a certain line in relation to a certain matter. In actual fact, we are doing it because, as we have yielded our will to the Holy Spirit, He has led us to pray along the line of His will.

Thus we have prayed with assurance, for -

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

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

You ask, “Does it work?”

Let me answer by saying, “Yes! It certainly does work!”

On the other hand, I would like to ask a question of you.

If you have any doubts about the Lord Jesus Who tells us that it is possible to pray according to His will, if it were not so, then the promise of **1 John 5:14-15** would not make sense. It would mock us.

God tells us that we may know His will. Therefore, we may pray according to His will, through His Word and by the indwelling presence and the intercessory ministry of the Holy Spirit.

So, if we would know how to pray “according to the will of God,” we must read, study and obey God’s Word, so that we are familiar with it and become acquainted with the will of God.

We must live day by day in humble submission to the Holy Spirit, Who will make intercession for us “according to the will of God.”

Romans 8:27 - *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.*

THE THINGS WHICH JESUS DID

STUDY 4

Scripture Portion: John 11:45-46

John 11:45-46 - *Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him.*

46 *But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.*

In these verses there are two phrases which introduce our theme.

John 11:45 - *.....the things which Jesus did.....*

John 11:46 - *.....what things Jesus had done.*

For the fullest account of the things which Jesus did during His earthly life and ministry, we need to read all four gospels.

Luke, in writing the book of **Acts**, tells us that in his gospel, he recorded -

Acts 1:1 - *The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,*

Matthew, Mark and John did the same. If we would get a complete picture of all that Jesus did during His time on earth, we must read all four gospels.

Some people believe there are contradictions in the accounts given to us by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. But this is a mistaken idea for there is perfect harmony between the four records.

Matthew presents the Lord Jesus as the King.

Mark presents Him as the Servant of Jehovah.

Luke presents Him as the perfect Man.

John, in his record, emphasizes our Lord's deity and declares Him as the Son of God.

Therefore, in order to gain a complete picture of our wonderful Saviour, we need to place the four gospel accounts together. By so doing, we will see the glory of His Person and the nature of His ministry.

In our text, the apostle John is making reference to the particular things which Jesus had done in connection with the raising of Lazarus.

This very naturally makes us ask, "What things had Jesus done?"

In order to gain a full answer to this question, we need to read the whole chapter, which

gives us a most thrilling, dramatic and absorbing record of the sovereign love, power, grace and understanding of our Lord. As we read it, we will learn some valuable lessons.

What things did Jesus do?

THE FIRST THING WHICH JESUS DID WAS THIS: HE RECEIVED A VERY URGENT REQUEST FOR HELP. INSTEAD OF RESPONDING AT ONCE, HE DELIBERATELY DELAYED GIVING HIS HELP.

Notice exactly what happened.

In Bethany, Jesus had three special friends - Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Lazarus became sick. His condition deteriorated so rapidly that Martha and Mary, his sisters, sent for Jesus.

John 11:3 - *Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.*

When Jesus heard that His friend was so ill, did He at once set off for Bethany to give His help?

No. Contrary to what we would have expected, contrary to what Martha and Mary expected, that is exactly what He did *not* do.

John 11:4 - *When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.*

This is the first thing to notice in this incident. We read what Jesus did in -

John 11:6 - *When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.*

The delay was quite deliberate.

John 11:7 - *Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judaea again.*

This is an amazing thing. Yet have we not had experience like this?

We have wanted help. We have asked the Lord to undertake for us, but our prayer has not been answered at once, or in the way we expected it would be answered. Our loved one has died before the Lord's help has come.

Well, this is exactly what happened in Bethany more than 1900 years ago. This is what Jesus did then and it is what He often does today.

What was, and is, the meaning of His action?

It will help us if we take careful note of the following sequence.

Jesus loved Martha, Mary and Lazarus.

John 11:5 - *Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.*

b. Jesus knew of their great trouble.

John 11:3 - *Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.*

3. Jesus could have prevented Lazarus from dying.

John 11:32 - *Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.*

d. Jesus did not prevent the death of His friend.

John 11:37 - *And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?*

e. Jesus delayed for two days before He set out for Bethany.

John 11:6 - *When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.*

John 11:17 - *Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already.*

4. He gave His help.

John 11:43-44 - *And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.*

44 And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

g. What He gave was better than that which they had asked for.

John 11:40 - *Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?*

Think on these seven very important truths, for they all relate to us.

The Lord loves us. He knows all about our troubles. He can prevent our troubles if it is His will to do so.

Very often, although He hears our cry for help and is ever faithful in His promise to hear and answer our prayers, He does not always answer in the way, or at the time, we expect or want.

He does not prevent us from experiencing trial and even loss. He often delays before answering our prayers and giving His help.

He always gives His help, when it is His will and His time to do so. And what He gives is always better than that for which we ask or think we need most.

Why did Jesus deal with Martha, Mary and Lazarus in this way? Why does He deal with us in this way?

There are two reasons.

First - He deals with His children in this way in order that their trouble and time of testing might provide a situation in which the glory of God can be revealed.

John 11:4 - *When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.*

Second - Why He deals with His children in this way is in order that their faith might be put to the test and be developed.

John 11:15 - *And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.*

These, then, are two reasons why our Lord often deals with us in the same way today, by delaying the help we need, and by allowing bereavement, trial and weeping.

THE SECOND THING WHICH JESUS DID WAS THIS: WHEN HE CAME TO BETHANY, HE AT ONCE IDENTIFIED HIMSELF WITH MARTHA AND MARY IN THEIR GREAT SORROW.

There is one question which is frequently asked by many people, "Does Jesus care when our loved one is seriously ill, or injured or even dies?"

We wonder sometimes whether He does care for us and hear our cry for help because He delays giving the help which might have saved our loved one.

Well of course, Jesus cares! We only have to read on into this chapter to be assured of this fact.

For example -

John 11:32-35 - *Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.*

33 When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,

34 And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see.

35 Jesus wept.

The two tender words in **verse 35** (the shortest verse in the Bible) make this quite clear. “*Jesus wept.*” What lovely words are these!

Here, in this simple record of what happened all those years ago, is the evidence that our Lord does care. He draws near and weeps with us. He identifies Himself with us in all our trials and tribulations -

Hebrews 4:15 - *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*

He knows every human experience of testing and trial. When He was upon the earth, He knew loneliness, sorrow, misunderstanding and physical suffering.

He knew hunger and thirst. He knew weariness and bereavement. He also knew times of intense spiritual testings.

So, the hymn writer was right when he wrote, “Jesus knows all about our struggles.”

He does!

What is your trouble?

Name it and you will find that the Lord will meet with you and mingle His tears with yours. He is “*the man Christ Jesus.*”

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

He knows every human experience. He is the God-man, Who is sovereign, mighty and glorious in His deity, tender, gracious and understanding in His humanity.

Isaiah 63:9 - *In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.*

3. THE THIRD THING WHICH JESUS DID WAS THIS: HE REVEALED WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A

CHRISTIAN DIES.

Lazarus really did die.

John 11:14 - *Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.*

Indeed, Lazarus was dead so long by the time Jesus came to his grave, that practical Martha questioned the possibility, or the wisdom, of his being raised to life.

John 11:39 - *Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.*

Yes. Not only did Lazarus die but the process of corruption and decomposition had begun in his body by the time Jesus arrived on the scene.

The point I want you to notice, however, is that Jesus spoke about Lazarus as being “asleep.”

John 11:11 - *These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.*

He meant that death for the believer is just like going to sleep. The poor, tired, sick body goes to sleep in the same way as we go to sleep at the end of the day. We stretch out upon our bed and say, “Goodnight. I will see you in the morning.”

It is just like that when a Christian dies.

After the toil and the exertions of work and the pleasures of the day, comes sleep, with its rest and renewal.

When a Christian dies, the body goes to sleep, but his spirit goes to be with Christ.

Paul clearly tells us Christians are in one of two places - either they are in the body and are absent from the Lord, or they are absent from the body and are present with the Lord.

2 Corinthians 5:6 - *Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:*

2 Corinthians 5:8 - *We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.*

Members of God’s family are located in two places only:

Ephesians 3:15 - *Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,*

Did you ever notice what happened when Stephen as martyred?

We read about it in -

Acts 7:59-60 - *And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*

60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Yes, he fell asleep. That is, his spirit fled away to be with Christ, but his body fell asleep.

How wonderful it is for the child of God when he dies! He is only asleep. He will wake up soon. Read what Paul says in **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**.

“But,” you ask, “How can their bodies wake up after years in the grave? How can there be a bodily resurrection?”

This is a common enough question, but there is a perfectly satisfying answer to it.

Let me show you one other thing which Jesus did.

4. THE FOURTH THING WHICH JESUS DID WAS THIS: HE DEMONSTRATED HIS POWER TO RAISE THE DEAD AND TO REUNITE SPIRIT, SOUL AND BODY AFTER DEATH HAD TAKEN PLACE AND CORRUPTION HAD SET IN.

We must remember that Lazarus had been dead for four days.

“By now,” said Martha, “he stinketh.”

This meant that a miracle was needed. It was not enough simply to infuse new life into the body of Lazarus, for his body was partially decayed.

Could Jesus not only raise Lazarus but give him complete physical restoration?

Yes, He could!

John 11:43-44 - *And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.*

44 And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

He came out of the grave alive and whole.

This is exactly what will happen to all the “dead in Christ,” that is, Christians who have died, when Jesus comes.

They will not have their old bodies revived or patched up. They will have entirely new bodies “like unto His glorious body.”

Philippians 3:20-21 - *For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:*

21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body,

Lazarus was raised from the dead with a new human body. But later he had to die again. Probably before that, he would have had to experience illness, aches and pains, and possibly disease.

But our new bodies will be subject to none of these things, for they will be new bodies altogether.

“But,” someone will say, “How are the dead raised up? With what body do they come?”

1 Corinthians 15:35-38 - *But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?*

36 Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:

37 And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:

38 But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.

1 Corinthians 15:42-44 - *So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:*

43 It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:

44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

1 Corinthians 15:53-57 - *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

These are just a few of the wonderful things which Jesus did long ago.

Notice that when He did these things -

John 11:45 - *Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him.*

Do you believe on Him? Do you really believe on Him?

How much do you believe on Him? How much do you trust on Him?

If we will read this chapter of John's gospel carefully in the light of what we have just been considering, we will realize afresh what a gracious and loving Saviour we have. We will be brought to the place where we will trust Him more and serve Him better, whatever He sees fit to do.

We will enter more into the meaning of -

Romans 8:28 - *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

and of -

John 13:7 - *Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.*

We will believe in a new way that God is working out His purpose in our lives through His permission of delays, denials and disappointments which we all experience.

At each stage along life's pathway, when sorrows come as well as joys, we will be able to say -

1 Samuel 3:18 - *And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good.*

We will know that what He does is always for our good and thus always for His glory.

THE FULL-ORBED CHRISTIAN LIFE

STUDY 5

Scripture Portion: Galatians 2:20

Galatians 2:20 - *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

What a wonderful verse is this! What a favorite it is among God's people! It is a personal testimony which the apostle Paul wrote to the church at Galatia, but I would like to underline some of the truths contained in this verse.

Of all the statements of texts in the New Testament which describe the Christian life, this is probably the most complete. It describes what we may well call "the full-orbed Christian life." Yet, it is true to say that to many people it appears to be paradoxical.

Here is the testimony of a man who says that he is crucified and dead, yet the next moment he says that he is alive.

The question arises as to how a man can be dead and alive at the same time! There seems to be a great mystery here.

Of all the translations and paraphrases of this verse which are true to the Greek text, I think I prefer Arthur S. Way's rendering -

"I have shared Messiah's crucifixion. I am living indeed, but it is not I that live. It is Messiah Whose life is in me. As for this, my earthly existence, I live by virtue of my faith in God's Son, Who loved me and surrendered Himself to death for me."

In unfolding the meaning of this great verse, I want to begin by emphasizing several basic truths concerning the Christian life which are clearly stated in it.

The first truth to notice is that -

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS AN ENTIRELY NEW LIFE.

It is very important to understand this, for many people believe that the Christian life is the old, unregenerate life improved, patched up or reformed.

But the Christian life is an entirely new life which is imparted to us by the Holy Spirit when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and are born again.

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.*

When, through the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit, we become born again Christians, the very life of God enters our personalities. We become partakers of the divine nature, partakers of the very life of God.

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.*

If we have become Christians, it is not by virtue of any change in our old life. It is because we have received a new life through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. We have put on Christ.

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

In our next text, the apostle Paul speaks of his old life. He then tells us of the new life he received at his conversion.

When he says, "I am (have been) crucified with Christ," he is referring to the old life of Saul of Tarsus, to all that he was by nature without Christ, before he became a Christian.

When he goes on to say, "nevertheless I live," he is referring to the new life which he received from Christ at the time of his conversion on the Damascus road and which had been his ever since that time.

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

That is, he has become the recipient of a new life altogether, the recipient of eternal life, the Christ-life, the Christian life!

The second truth to notice is that -

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A LIFE LIVED IN THE FLESH.

This means that it is a life lived in the body. Where do you and I have to live the Christian life? In these mortal bodies which God has given us.

The word "flesh" is used in two different ways in scripture. Where Paul says, "the life that I now live in the flesh," it refers to the sphere in which the believer lives the Christian life, namely, in his physical body.

What a wonderful thing it is that, in the very sphere in which the first Adam fell, the last

Adam, (our Lord Jesus Christ), triumphed so completely.

1 Corinthians 15:22 - *For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

Through faith in Him, we may also triumph!

The sphere in which we are to live the Christian life is not in the clouds, nor in heaven (just yet!). Nor is it in a monastery or a convent. It is in the world in this earthly body.

The third truth to notice is that -

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A LIFE OF PRESENT VICTORY.

We cannot possibly read **Galatians 2:20** without detecting the great assurance of victory which runs through the whole verse.

Read it through again and notice the ring of triumph which sounds through every phrase and word! Get the force of the contrast which Paul makes between his old sinning, failing, unregenerate life, and the new life, “the life which I now live.”

Here is the secret of victorious Christian living.

You see, the Christian life is not only a new life given to us by God to live in the flesh, it is a victorious, triumphant, overcoming, satisfying and God-glorifying life, a life of moment-by-moment victory!

I wonder whether you are enjoying this victorious Christian life or whether you still need to enter by faith into the full enjoyment of a full-orbed Christian experience?

The fourth truth to notice is that -

4. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A LIFE OF FAITH.

I think I hear someone say, “That is just the problem! That is my difficulty - faith!”

No! Your problem is unbelief.

We exercise faith all the time. When we buy a return ticket before taking a train journey, we exercise faith that there will be a train to take us to our destination. When we have fulfilled our purpose in being there, we exercise faith that there will be another train to bring us back home again!

We go to church by faith. We read that the service will be held at a certain time. We, in faith, believe that the service will actually begin at that stated time.

We then exercise faith that the pews, or chairs, will support our weight when we sit on them.

Our trouble is unbelief.

The writer to the Hebrews warns us against an evil heart of unbelief.

Hebrews 3:12 - *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.*

But, this verse tells us that the Christian life is a life of faith.

What, or who, is the object of our faith?

The Son of God.

Galatians 2:20 - *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

The Christian life, therefore, is a life of faith in the Son of God.

What is the simplest definition we can give of faith?

Faith is recognizing what God says, and reckoning upon it, which means, taking God at His Word, believing what He says and trusting Him.

God says a certain thing. I believe Him. I reckon upon that thing.

I trust implicitly in what He says. I rely upon it because God says it.

Now, I want you to notice that in **Galatians 2:20**, God says three things about His Son and every believer.

A true Christian is a man who believes these three things.

He reckons them to be true because God declares them to be true.

What are these three things which God declares about His Son and me, about His Son and you, about His Son and every Christian?

1. HE GAVE HIS LIFE FOR ME.

This is the glorious truth which is stated at the end of our text where we read the words

Galatians 2:20 -*the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

It is impossible to be a Christian at all and not to believe that. All Christian experience begins when we come to the cross of Calvary as poor, guilty, lost sinners, and recognize the dying form of the Saviour.

On the cross, the Lord Jesus died for us. The Just One died for the unjust one.

1 Peter 3:18 - *For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:*

The guiltless One took the place of the guilty one.

Christian experience begins when the Holy Spirit leads us to recognize the truth of the old hymn of Philip Bliss -

Bearing shame and scoffing rude
In my place condemned He stood;
Sealed my pardon with the blood.
Hallelujah! What a Saviour!

We only begin the Christian life when we are able to make personal that great statement in -

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

He knew how sinful I had been
He knew that God must punish sin;
So, out of pity, Jesus said,
"I'll bear the punishment instead."

Yes. He gave His life for me. This is the first wonderful thing which God says about the Lord Jesus and every Christian. He gave Himself for us on the cross.

To have faith in the Son of God means, therefore, that we believe this fact, reckon upon it, rely upon it, and rejoice in the wonder of it!
Faith cries out, "It is enough that Jesus died and that He died for me!"

When the Lord Jesus died upon the cross of Calvary, He not only gave Himself for me, but our text tells us of a second wonderful thing which happened when He died.

2. HE TOOK MY LIFE FROM ME.

When the apostle Paul said, "I have been crucified with Christ," he was looking right back over the years to the time when the Saviour hung upon the cross.

He was, in fact, saying - “When He died, I died with Him. In the purpose and intention of God, when the son of God died, He not only gave Himself for me, but He took my life from me - my old sinful, selfish, unregenerate life which was under the condemnation of God.”

Here is the great truth of our identification with Christ in His death. It is judicially true of every believer, without exception, that he was identified with Christ in His death.

God reckons us dead to sin the very moment we put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour.

This is not a matter of feeling, but of fact. God says it, therefore, it is true.

In the reckoning of God, it is just as much a fact that I am dead as the Lord Jesus was crucified and died on the cross nineteen hundred years ago!

In **Romans 6**, this truth is more fully stated. The apostle is writing to believers. He declares the fact that all believers are already dead through their union with Christ in His death.

Read **Romans 6:2-10**.

Then notice we are exhorted to -

Romans 6:11 - *Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin,.....*

In other words, believe God’s testimony that when the Lord Jesus died, you died. Reckon upon that.

To reckon that I died with Christ, that when He died, He took my life from me, is virtually, by faith, to attend my own funeral. To do this is to enter into God’s way to victory.

Romans 6:7 - *For he that is dead is freed from sin.*

How can a dead man sin? Did you ever know a dead boy to lose his temper? Did you ever hear a dead girl say an unkind word about anyone? Did you ever know a dead man to tell a lie?

No. “He that is dead is freed from sin.”

If, when we are tempted to sin, we reckon ourselves to be “dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord,” we will experience wonderful deliverance and victory.

This is God’s gracious provision for every one of His children.

There is a classic story told concerning George Muller. It is said that, on one occasion, he was asked the secret of his life. Speaking very quietly, he said,

“A day came in George Muller’s experience when George Muller died. Henceforth it was no longer George Muller’s desires, George Muller’s tastes, George Muller’s will, for George Muller was dead!”

You and I, in simple faith, may reckon the same thing to be true in our lives.

But, there is one more truth enshrined in our text. Not only did the Lord Jesus give His life for me, not only did He take my old life from me, but -

3. HE LIVES HIS LIFE IN ME.

The apostle Paul says, “I died with Christ, but now Christ lives in me.”

When Saul of Tarsus met the risen and exalted Lord on the Damascus road, he submitted to Him and acknowledged Him as his Saviour. The Lord Himself came into Saul’s life to live His life in and through Saul’s yielded personality.

Thank God, not only was this true of Saul of Tarsus, or of Paul as he afterwards came to be known, but it is true of every Christian!

The Lord Jesus lives within us. He indwells us to reproduce His life in and through us. This, in the simplest possible terms, is what a Christian is. A Christian is “Christ-in.”

This truth of the indwelling presence of Christ in the life of every believer is brought before us in many scriptures.

Philippians 1:21 - *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

Colossians 1:27 - *To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:*

Colossians 3:4 - *When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*

Martin Luther once said, “If someone should knock at my heart’s door and ask, ‘Who lives here?’, I would answer, ‘Jesus Christ lives here. Martin Luther used to live here, but he died. Jesus Christ lives here now!’”

What we have to do, therefore, is to believe what God says. We may not fully understand it. Who can? But, because God says it, let us lay hold of it, let us reckon upon it.

What does He say?

He says three wonderful things about the Lord Jesus and me, about the Lord Jesus and you, and about the Lord Jesus and every believer.

This first thing is that, when the Lord Jesus died, He died for me.

The second thing is that, when the Lord Jesus died, I died with Him.

The third thing is that, when the Lord Jesus died, He rose again and returned to heaven. There, from the throne of heaven, He imparted His life to me. Now, by the operation and ministry of the Holy Spirit, He lives that life in and through me.

God says these things. He waits for us to reckon them to be true. He waits for us to say

-
*“O God, I believe what You say.
I believe that the Lord Jesus died for me.
I believe also that I died with the Lord Jesus.
I believe that the Lord Jesus now lives His life in me.
I take You and Your Word, not because I feel it or fully understand it, but
because You said it.”*

May God lead us all into the moment-by-moment, day-by-day experience of this glorious, full-orbed Christian life.

TURNING BITTERNESS INTO SWEETNESS

STUDY 6

Scripture Portion: Exodus 15:23-25

Exodus 15:23-25 - *And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah.*

24 And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?

25 And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them,

The message of these verses is that the Lord, in His wonderful goodness, is able to take the bitter experiences of life and fill them with glorious heavenly sweetness. He is able to make the bitter sweet.

We all experience bitter things, but God has ordained and provided that these things may be sanctified in such a way that we may even rejoice in them and thank Him for them.

It is important for us to notice that the Children of Israel did not just happen to come to Marah where the waters were bitter.

God led them there. Yes, He actually led them there and the waters were bitter!

This tells us at once that the Lord had a purpose in what He was doing. It was no haphazard thing. He was leading His people on.

All this happened in the line of His providential working.

He allowed His children to come to the bitter waters, then He turned those bitter waters into sweet waters, so that, in the end, they experienced bitter-sweet.

All the experiences of life alternate between these two things:

- sweetness and bitterness;
- the experience of the mountain top and the experience of the valley bottom;
- joy and sorrow;
- blessing and cursing,
- prosperity and adversity

Outside many a florist's shop we see the advertizement: "wreaths and bouquets made here," one suggesting bereavement and sorrow, the other suggesting joy and happiness.

Our lives are like that. One day we are on the mountain top, the next we may be in the

valley.

We may, and should, live at all times in the sunshine of God's presence, with His joy and peace filling our hearts, with no self-made shadows of sin, doubt or fear spoiling our fellowship with Him.

We all experience the shadows of adversity and trial which God permits in our lives, which are for our good and also for His glory.

This is well stated in the words seen on an old sundial: "*Sunshine and shade, so too our lives are made.*"

We go to bed full of joy and gladness, our sky is cloudless, but, in the morning, the postman delivers a letter containing bad news.

Our fellowship with God has not changed, or need not change, but there is a cloud in our sky. We have come to Marah.

Moses had a tremendous task, for two million pilgrims were in his care. They were in the wilderness. They had been saved from Egyptian bondage and had witnessed God's mighty acts. It was Moses' responsibility to lead them through the wilderness to the Promised Land.

At this stage of their journey, as **Exodus 15** tells us, all was going wonderfully well. The people were dancing. They were jubilant after the Lord's wonderful triumph over their enemies at the Red Sea.

Then came a trying three days of testing, for they were without water. Then they saw water - only to find that it was bitter. It was undrinkable!

In a flash, they descended from the heights of joy and gladness down to the place of sorrow, and, in their case, complaint and dissatisfaction.

We make a great mistake if we view these Old Testament historical portions simply as ancient history. They are authentic history and are written for our learning.

Romans 15:4 - *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*

1 Corinthians 10:11 - *Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*

We should, therefore, ask the question: What lessons should we learn from these things which happened to God's ancient people at Marah?

Notice first of all -

THE PROVING WE MUST ANTICIPATE.

We may as well accept the fact that the Marah experiences of bitterness come to us all. We cannot escape them.

Proverbs 14:10 - *The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.*

You may be at Marah now, in the place of bitterness, experiencing trial and sorrow. It is quite impossible to go through life and to escape these experiences. Therefore, if you are not at Marah now, you may well be there tomorrow, or next week, or next month, or next year.

I am not being pessimistic when I say this. This is the plain teaching of scripture. This is true in the life of every one of God's children. No one escapes Marah.

There are some people who say, "If you will come to Christ and put your trust in Him, all your troubles will be over." That is not true!

There is a very real sense in which 'trouble', in the sense of God's proving and testing, only begins when we come to Christ and put our lives into His care and keeping. The Christian life is not a bed of roses.

Jesus said -

John 16:33 - *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*

The apostle Peter said -

1 Peter 4:12 - *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:*

The classic passage in which this subject of God's chastening (His child training) is dealt with, is -

Hebrews 12:6-11 - *For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

10 For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

In this section of scripture, the writer says quite categorically that “whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth.”

He goes on to say that these “bitter” experiences of chastening, of coming to Marah, are marks of our adoption.

Every Christian is tested and tried by the Lord for a wise and beneficial purpose. If we are without these experiences of His testing, we may well question as to whether we are members of His family, whether, in fact, we are real Christians.

This is made clear all through the early chapters of **Exodus**. For example -

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

What was the object of all this? Why did they have to come to Marah?

It was part of His plan for His children to prove them -

Exodus 15:25 - *And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them,*

A verse which has helped me very much is -

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

You see, God does not send trials to distress us. He sends them and permits them in order to prove us, to humble us and to see whether we really love Him, whether we are determined, at all costs to obey Him.

Thank God, He not only leads us to Marah, but He leads us through the experiences of Marah to Elim.

Exodus 15:27 - *And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters.*

The trials which God sends and permits are varied.

The Children of Israel not only experienced bitter waters, but they experienced **no water**.

They experienced *no bread*. They experienced *the attacks of their enemies*, and *all kinds of trials and afflictions*.

The trials in your life and mine are varied also. Sometimes they are very severe.

This trial at Marah was very severe because it meant that God's children were deprived of an absolute necessity - water.

Fancy being without water in the wilderness or finding water which is too brackish to drink! How that bitter water must have seemed to mock them.

Learn this lesson carefully.

We must all expect and experience God's testing. We cannot escape from it. Really and truly, we should not want to do so. If God is doing something in our lives, we should be able to say, "Lord, go on with what You are doing."

The important question when we come to Marah should be - "What?" never "Why?"

The important thing is our reaction to the thing which has happened. How do we react in the time of testing? What kind of reaction must we avoid?

THE PERIL WE MUST AVOID.

When the Israelites came to Marah and found the waters were bitter, they reacted in a most unfortunate way.

Exodus 15:24 - *And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?*

They were upset. Immediately they began to complain against God's servant and, of course, against God Himself. It is a fatal tendency of our fallen human nature to grumble and to be discontented.

C. H. Spurgeon said that the word 'murmur' is made up of two infantile sounds - "mur - mur!"

So, when we murmur instead of trusting God, we are becoming babies again, or as F. B. Meyer said - "*We turn from being minstrels to becoming mutineers.*"

One moment these Israelites were singing the songs of Zion and praising God for His deliverance, the next they were complaining and murmuring against Him.

How often we, too, are like that!

In his autobiography, Joseph Parker tells of the terrible blow which came into his life when his wife was suddenly taken away after thirty-four years of married bliss. This is what he wrote -

“On January 26, 1899, I entered upon my old age for, at 9:30 that night, the life of my life, the heart of my heart, ascended to the right hand of God.”

Yes, after thirty-four years of singing and dancing - Marah! Then Dr. Parker went on to say -

“In that dark hour, I almost became an atheist. How could I be otherwise? My chief joy had been taken from me. Oh, Gethsemene of bitterness!”

Thank God, this murmuring passed and Joseph Parker, whom God led on from Marah to Elim, became a different man, a transformed man with a new message and a new ministry.

It is unbelief which makes us murmur, complain and fret. Why do we do it?

Because we look at our circumstances instead of looking to God. We look at all the problems. We look at our troubles. We look at ourselves.

Then we become filled with self pity. Then we take our eyes off God. Then we begin to complain and say, “Could not God give us sweet water?”

Well He could, of course, just as He could have given those Israelites sweet water. The trouble was that they did not trust Him. Yet He was so near to them all the time, waiting to help them and to bless them.

What, then, should our reaction be when life's testings and trials come upon us? How should we react when we come to Marah and find that the waters are bitter?

3. THE PROCEDURE WE MUST ADOPT.

If the peril we must avoid is that of murmuring, what is the procedure we must adopt to get the victory over the temptation to murmur?

Exodus 15:24-25 - *And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?*

25 And he cried unto the LORD;.....

He prayed! That is the secret.

Moses did not rebuke the people. He could have done that. He could have said, "Do not be silly. Do not be so faithless!"

Instead of doing that, he went into the presence of God committed the whole situation to the Lord.

Notice another thing he could have done. He could have resigned. He could have said, "Lord, I cannot carry on with this responsibility of having two million fretting, murmuring people!"

But he did not do that. He at once related the need to the Lord Himself.

Over and over again in the scriptures we find this very principle operating. For instance-

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

James did not say, "Let him send for the doctor.....or for the pastor." He says, "Let him immediately relate his affliction, his suffering, his situation of trial and testing at Marah, to the Lord Himself and place it and himself in the very centre of God's will."

We so often murmur or complain, or get the medicine chest or call for the doctor, instead of going to God first of all.

Hannah had an experience of bitterness. She longed to have a child. In her bitterness of soul, she prayed to the Lord.

1 Samuel 1:10 - *And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore.*

This is the secret of victory.

Then there was Elisha.

One day, the Shunammite woman said, "My son is dead!" What an experience of bitterness this was the for this mother! So what did Elisha do?

2 Kings 4:33 - *He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the LORD.*

This is the secret of victory in times of trial and testing.

Then there was Hezekiah.

He received a horrible letter from an enemy. What did he do? Did he fume and fret and show it to people and complain? No, he did not do that.

When he received the letter -

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

Then there was Daniel.

When his enemies wrote a decree saying that no one was to worship the true and living God, what did Daniel do? Complain? Murmur? Hold a conference?

NO! He went into his house, fell upon his knees, spread the whole matter before the Lord and prayed that God would undertake for him.

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.*

When Paul and Silas were in prison, they did exactly the same thing.

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

When Moses prayed, the Lord showed him the remedy -

Exodus 15:25 - *And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD showed him a tree,.....*

You see, prayer brings revelation. How significant was this revelation! “The Lord shewed him a tree.”

God's remedy for bitterness is a tree.

All through the ages the Lord has graciously heard and answered the prayers of His children as they have come to Him and cried out to Him. He did so here, as Moses prayed. In the answer He gave was the solution to the problem. The solution was, and is, a tree!

What is the significance of this?

4. THE PANACEA WE MUST APPLY.

A panacea is a universal medicine, a remedy for all ills.

The tree which was revealed to Moses, and which he was told to throw into the bitter waters, is symbolic of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is spoken of in the Old Testament as the “the righteous Branch.”

Jeremiah 23:5 - *Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.*

6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name

and of His cross -

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

You see, the only remedy for our ills, the only panacea that can sweeten life’s bitter experience, is found in the Person and work of Christ, in what He is, in what He has done for us in His suffering and sacrifice, and in what He is to us now as our great High Priest and Intercessor at the right hand of God.

Oh! If you are embittered because of the trials and afflictions which have befallen you, come to the cross and see Him suffering bitter pain and anguish. See what came out of that bitterness and anguish that He suffered.

What was the fruit of it all? Why, sweetness indescribable! And it will be the same for you.

One day we will thank God for our Marahs.

Just as by letting His Son be crucified, God was changing the bitterness into sweetness, though it did not look like it at the time. So the Lord is doing the same for us.

But we must apply the remedy. We must cast the tree into the bitter pool. We must get down low at the cross of Jesus and He will transform and transcend our Marahs. He will turn the water of bitterness into the wine of rejoicing.

Listen to the testimony of a man who had thrown in the tree -

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 - *For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.*

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Throw in the towel! Take Him right into your bitter experience and He will transform it. He will transform you.

The writer of the well known hymn must have learned the secret of victory by the bitter waters of Marah. We may do the same and join him in singing -

Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure,
By the cross are sanctified.
Peace is there that knows not measure,
Joys that through all time abide.

J. Bowring

BOND SLAVES FOREVER

STUDY 7

Scripture Portion: Exodus 21:2-6

In this passage of scripture, C. K. Mowell pictures a Hebrew slave in the slave market -

1. *Bought with a price.*
2. *Faced with a choice.*
3. *Constrained by a love.*

God's purpose and desire for each one of us is that we should serve Him forever.

What exactly is meant by that word "serve?"

Often we have a very limited concept of what it really means to serve God.

We think of service as being necessarily manifested in activity and movement. The real meaning is far deeper than that.

To serve the Lord, to be His bond slave, is to put oneself absolutely at His disposal and to be ready, without question, to do His will.

It means to take the position of the king's servants of whom we read in -

2 Samuel 15:15 - *And the king's servants said unto the king, Behold, thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint.*

The alternative to being a servant of the Lord is to be the servant of sin, self and Satan.

Paul, in writing to the church at Rome, refers to the fact that, prior to their conversion, they were -

Romans 6:17 - *But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.*

But we may also be servants of self, that is, in bondage to ourselves.

Paul referred to this when he wrote -

Romans 7:24 - *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

Every unregenerate person is the servant of Satan -

2 Corinthians 4:4 - *In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*

How terrible to be enslaved to sin, self and Satan!

On the other hand, how wonderful to be freed from this threefold bondage and to become a bond slave of Jesus Christ, to be “the Lord’s freeman,” for -

1 Corinthians 7:22 - *For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant.*

His service is perfect freedom!

Let us picture the young man described in **Exodus 21:2-6**.

Notice some interesting facts.

1. HE WAS BOUGHT WITH A PRICE.

Exodus 21:2 - *If thou buy an Hebrew servant,.....*

The young man we are picturing was in the slave market waiting to be bought. Why was he there?

Possibly it was because his parents were poor and had had to relinquish him in lieu of payment. Possibly he had committed some crime and had been sentenced to become a slave.

But, look at him. He was in bondage, unable to free himself. He was waiting to be sold to the highest bidder. Suddenly, however, there came into the slave market a master whom he at once recognized to be altogether worthy of his wholehearted service.

This master struck the bargain, paid the price and bought the young slave, who left the slave market the property of a new master. He had been bought with a price.

We were once in the slave market. We were in bondage to sin, self and Satan.

Jesus once said -

John 8:34 - *Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.*

We have been given a description of unconverted, unregenerate and unsaved men and women who are still in Satan’s slave market and are into bondage to sin, self and him.

Ephesians 2:2-3 - *Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:*

3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

What an awful bondage this is. How bound, fettered and enslaved is the unconverted person!

But every Christian can rejoice that one day there came into the slave market One Whom he at once recognized to be altogether worthy. This One was Jesus, the Son of God.

He willingly paid the redemption price of every fettered slave. The price paid was the shedding of His own most precious blood on Calvary's cross. He paid this price because He wanted to make each slave His Own man or woman forever.

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:

Because He wanted to purchase us out of the slave market of sin, Jesus died and paid the purchase price of our redemption.

Now it is true of us that -

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.*

These verses in **Exodus, chapter 21** are full of deep spiritual meaning. As we look into them again, we see a second picture brought before us of the young slave whom we have been considering.

2. HE WAS FACED WITH A CHOICE.

This choice is brought before us in -

Exodus 21:2 - *If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing.*

Exodus 21:5-6 - *And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free:*

6 Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door,

or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever.

The years had passed by. Now this young man had been the property of his master for six years. As the seventh year approached, however, he was faced with a decision.

If he wished, he could go out free and live an entirely independent life, relying upon his own resources to make his way and earn his living.

If his owner had been a bad master, if he had no wife and family to leave behind him, then this would be an easy choice. He would wait impatiently for the time when he could be freed from his dreadful life of slavery.

On the other hand, this young man had a good, God fearing, just man for his master who had treated and fed him well. Now he had to make a decision which would affect the rest of his life. He had to choose between a life of uncertainty and possible hardship in the world outside or the certainty of a good home, a good master and a good job.

The only condition which was imposed in regard to his remaining with his master was that “he shall serve him for ever.”

We who are Christians have been bought with a price. We serve a Master Who knows our need and our hearts and Who waits to undertake for us for the remainder of our days.

Satan is no longer our master. But he is jealous of our Saviour-Master. He seeks, at all costs, to turn us from being obedient servants to being disobedient servants; from being whole hearted, loyal servants to lazy, disloyal servants.

The only satisfaction Satan gets out of tempting us away from our Lord is the knowledge that it brings grief to the heart of Him Who has done so much for us.

The Lord never forces us to serve Him, but He still faces us with the challenge of -

Joshua 24:15 - *And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*

He has given us a free will. We can choose not to go His way and not to recognize His lordship in our lives.

What would cause a bond slave, in those far off days, to decide to forgo his freedom and remain with his master for ever?

What would make a Christian deny himself the so-called “freedom” of the attractions and allurements of this world and become the bond slave of his Master?”

The answer in both cases is the same.

3. HE WAS CONSTRAINED BY LOVE.

There is one mighty force which constrains a man to serve the Lord and to give his whole hearted allegiance to Him, that is, the love of Christ.

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:*

The word “constraineth” is a very strong word. It means that the love of Jesus for us which begets love in us for Him, presses us to serve Him whole heartedly, to be well pleasing to Him.

The constraint of the love of Christ is a marvelous thing.

In Paul’s life, it pressed him, forced him, to become the Lord’s willing bond slave, ready to suffer for Him and to die for Him.

But think how the love of Christ motivated the service of all the apostles. Think of the tens of thousands since then who have left their homes, their well-paid jobs, even their loved ones, to go where Christ has bidden them go to serve Him, because the constraint of His love was upon them.

When you remember that you have been bought with a price, and that price is the precious blood of Christ, do you not long, with all your heart, to respond to Him and humbly tell Him that you will be His bond slave for ever?

When the day came for this young slave to go free, he announced his decision. He would renounce the call of the outside world. He would remain with his master.

Exodus 21:5-6 - *And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free:*

6 Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever.

In what particular ways did love constrain him to remain with his master and serve him for ever?

Love constrained him in three ways.

He was constrained to make a clear decision.

Exodus 21:5 - *And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free:*

The decision was to be thought out and then made in a clear-cut way.

Have you ever made a clear-cut decision to be one hundred percent available to Christ as your Master? Have you ever got down before the Lord and told Him definitely that you will be His and His for ever?

If not, you may do so now. You may make a clear-cut decision to be utterly the Lord's. You may do this so definitely that you can write down and record the time and place of your decision.

b. He was constrained to make an open confession.

Exodus 21:6 - *Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever.*

The young man had to be taken before the judges to give his decision. He was then taken to the door post and, in the sight of many others, he would have his ear bored with an awl (awl). Thus, the judges and everyone else present witnessed his surrender and dedication.

This involved a public confession.

It is a grand thing when a Christian is willing to confess the Lord openly and unashamedly before others, not only by word of mouth once, but on every available occasion.

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

Remember that Jesus said -

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

3. He was constrained to make a permanent dedication.

As an indication that he was now willing to serve his master for ever -

Exodus 21:6 - *Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever.*

He was taken to the door post. His ear was bored with an aul (awl). This was a token that he had handed himself over unreservedly, of his own free will, to serve his master day by day, week by week, month by month, year by year, for ever!

Thus, he became a marked man. He had the mark upon his ear. The dedication he had made was a permanent one. It was for ever!

I very much like -

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

The Amplified version is rendered as -

I appeal to you therefore, brethren, and beg of you in view of [all] the mercies of God, to make a decisive dedication of your bodies--presenting all your members and faculties--as a living sacrifice, holy (devoted, consecrated) and well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable (rational, intelligent) service and spiritual worship.

Isn't that great?

That is just what God wants and asks of us. Surely it is the love of Christ which constrains us to make this decisive, unreserved and whole hearted dedication of ourselves to the Lord.

A ROW OF MEDICINE BOTTLES

STUDY 8

Scripture Portion: Psalm 37

Life is made up of excitements, to a greater or lesser degree.

One small excitement I still experience each morning is finding out what the postman has brought me. Some letters bring great encouragement, others bring opportunities for giving help to those in need. Still others bring seed thoughts for me to pick up and use if I wish.

One morning, I received a letter from a friend who suggested that I should preach on “A Row Of Medicine Bottles” from **Psalm 37**. From that seed thought a sermon emerged which I want now to pass on to you.

When I first read my friend’s letter, I was curious to know what he meant. However, after thinking it over, I began to see that there are times in the experience of each one of us when we feel unwell. We know that we are in need of a dose of some kind of medicine.

My dictionary tells me that medicine is “any substance used (especially internally) for the treatment or prevention of disease. Disease is really dis-ease, uneasiness or any want of health.

We, as Christians, know that we are often dis-eased, or unwell, in a spiritual sense. It may be that that is our condition now. Perhaps in a spiritual sense, we are thoroughly out of sorts and need some medicine.

Did you ever think of the Bible as a medicine cupboard? It is just that.

As I thought over the suggestion that I should preach on “A Row Of Medicine Bottles”, I opened the “Cupboard” and examined some of the bottles on the shelf called **Psalm 37**.

In the back of my mind was the question which king David asked of the woman of Tekoah long ago, “What aileth thee?”

2 Samuel 14:5 -*What aileth thee?*.....

Are you in need of spiritual medicine? Then look with me into **Psalm 37** and see how very wonderfully God supplies the remedy for all our ills from the contents of the bottles on this shelf.

IF YOU ARE TROUBLED AND PERPLEXED ABOUT THE PROSPERITY OF THE
WICKED, TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT -

Psalm 37:1-2 - *Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.*

2 For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.

So said David, the psalmist. He was very perplexed, as are many of God's people, to see the wicked flourishing, prospering and *getting away with it!*

This state of affairs causes uneasiness. If we are frank about it, as we look out into the world today, it does seem to us that bad men, who have no love for God, who deny Him and blaspheme His Name, seem to prosper.

Every time we open our newspapers, we read of evil forces of men and nations which are advancing victoriously. All this is very upsetting, unsettling and perplexing.

Murderers, robbers and revolutionaries perpetrate their devilish deeds, then seem to emerge scot-free.

This was the problem of the psalmist. It is to this very kind of situation that he refers to in this psalm.

What can be done about it?

I will tell you. Take a dose of medicine from this psalm, for this was David's perplexity.

What did he say about this?

Verses 1 and 2 give us the answer.

If this bottle on the shelf does not do the trick, I suggest you need also to take a dose of -

Psalm 37:10 - *For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.*

Psalm 37:13 - *The Lord shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming.*

Psalm 37:35-36 - *have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree.*

36 Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.

Take a good long draught from all these bottles. As you do this, you will be brought from your state of dis-ease into a settled condition of heart and mind.

You will recognize that God is sovereign in the affairs of men and nations and that, in His

own good time, He will step in and take control.

You will also be filled with compassion for all those who do not know the Lord, as you realize that their time is short and that soon God's judgment will fall upon them.

IF YOUR INCOME SEEMS TO BE DWINDLING AND YOU ARE WONDERING
HOW YOU ARE GOING TO MAKE ENDS MEET, TAKE A DOSE OF -

Psalm 37:3 - *Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.*

The problem of supply is a very serious one. It causes dis-ease with many people. The cost of living is rising so rapidly and where is the provision coming from?

Elijah lived through a terrible drought. He must have experienced times of doubt. But, what did God say to him?

Read **1 Kings 17:3-16**.

There is another bottle on this shelf. It contains -

Psalm 37:19 - *They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.*

And yet another bottle -

Psalm 37:25 - *I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.*

Do you remember the words which the Lord gave to Abraham when he was in desperate need? It was "God will provide."

Genesis 22:8 - *And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.*

El Shaddai is one of the Names of God. It means "The Enough God."

Genesis 17:1 - *And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.*

So, if you are troubled about the matter of provision, I suggest you take a really good dose of -

Psalm 37:3 - *Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.*

Speed up the action by taking further doses from -

Psalm 37:19 - *They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.*

Psalm 37:25 - *I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.*

You can be quite sure of this: the Lord has promised to look after you and to provide for your need, and He will for “hath He said, and shall He not do it?”

Numbers 23:19 - *God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?*

IF YOU ARE DEPRESSED, DOWNCAST, IMPATIENT, AND YOU FEEL THAT GOD DOES NOT CARE, THAT EVEN YOUR PRAYERS GO UNANSWERED, TAKE A DOSE, EVERY NIGHT AND MORNING OF -

Psalm 37:4-7 - *Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.*

5 Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.

6 And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.

7 Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.

This is a strong dose, but how efficacious it is!

It is so easy, when things go wrong, to fall into a depressed and downcast condition and to feel that God no longer loves or cares for us!

There is a story told of a man who had a pain in his leg, so he consulted his doctor. After the leg had been examined, the doctor gave his patient some pink pills, which, he assured his patient, would soon put the leg right.

The man then said that he also had a pain in his shoulder. After further examination, the doctor prescribed some green pills for him.

The man had one more thing to say. “Doctor, how do the pink pills know how to go to my leg and how do the green pills know how to go to my shoulder?”

You may well say to me, “How can these verses banish my depression and my dread of the future, and restore my confidence in God?”

All I can say is this: take a dose and try it for yourself. It works for I have proved it.

If you feel you need further encouragement and some stronger medication to liven you up, get alone with **Psalm 42** and enter into the experience of the psalmist.

Talk to yourself. Question yourself, as he did.

Psalm 42:11 - *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?.....*

But, he did not stop there. He continued -

Psalm 42:11 - *.....hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*

So, rise up in faith. Put your whole trust in the One Who will never fail you.

4. IF YOU ARE UPSET, ANGRY AND YOU FEEL RESENTFUL AND VINDICTIVE, ESPECIALLY IF YOU FEEL AN ATTACK COMING ON, TAKE A REGULAR DOSE OF -

Psalm 37:8 - *Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.*

It is the unexpected things which cause anger and resentment to rise up within us. Someone speaks an unkind word, or perhaps the unkind word is followed by a thoughtless action, then anger rises up within us.

The apostle Paul very wisely said to the Ephesian Christians -

Ephesians 4:26-27 - *Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: 27 Neither give place to the devil.*

Barnes, the commentator, makes these verses read -

“Be ye angry, which may be the case, and which may be unavoidable, see that the sudden excitement does not become sin. Do not let it overleap its proper bounds. Do not cherish it. Do not let it remain in your bosom, even to the setting of the sun. Though the sun be sinking in the west, let not the passion linger in the bosom, but let its last rays find you always peaceful and calm.”

What a word that is from the past! Even though it comes from a bygone age, it is absolutely up-to-date and applicable to us today.

If we are not to let the sun go down upon our wrath, it means that we must take a dose of medicine before we go to bed. In other words, we are to get every wrong emotion out of our systems, such as anger, bitterness, jealousy and resentment.

We are to be at peace with God, with all men, and with ourselves before the day closes. If only we would do this, how many problems and difficult situations would be quickly solved!

5. IF YOU ARE FILLED WITH MORBID FEARS AND DOUBTS ABOUT YOUR SALVATION AND YOUR ETERNAL SECURITY, TAKE STRONG DOSES OF -

Psalm 37:18 - *The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever.*

Psalm 37:24 - *Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.*

Psalm 37:33-34 - *The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged.*

34 Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.

This is the prescription to banish doubt!

Psalm 37:28 - *For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.*

Many Christians lack the assurance of their salvation. They are filled with doubts as to whether God has accepted them, whether they are really saved or not and whether the Lord will let them go out of His presence into outer darkness.

How subtle the devil is!

Is this your dis-ease, your malady? Does it threaten you, especially at night?

Well, here is the remedy.

Notice in the verses under this heading that the two words “for ever” occur twice. The Lord promises that, even if we fail and fall, we shall not fall out of His loving care. He will uphold us with His own hand.

If you lack assurance, there is only one way to gain it, or regain it. Assurance comes by seeing what God says in His Word and by taking Him at His Word.

Take the Word of God! Believe it!

God says you are His if you have put your trust in Him as your Saviour. Therefore, you are safe and absolutely secure, for He will never let you go.

Take a large dose of that!

6. IF YOU ARE TROUBLED ABOUT GOD’S PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE, ABOUT GOD’S GUIDANCE, ABOUT HIS INTEREST IN YOUR JOB, YOUR CAREER OR YOUR FUTURE SERVICE, TAKE A DOSE OF -

Psalm 37:23-24 - *The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.*

24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.

What a tremendous statement is contained in these two verses.

We must always remember one thing when we are thinking about God’s guidance. It is this: the Lord is far more concerned to guide us along the pathway of His will than we are to be guided by Him.

If we will trust Him, lean upon Him, wait for Him and seek to please Him, He will unfailingly and unfalteringly guide us into ways which are pleasing to Him and profitable to us.

Even if we stumble and fall, as indeed we do, and shall do, He will uphold us and lead us on.

If you are a young man and you are concerned as to your future, let me urge you to take a dose of these verses.

If you are a girl and you long to marry a man of God's choice, then you should take this particular dose as well. It will settle you, establish you and take away all your dis-ease.

7. IF YOU ARE IN GREAT TROUBLE, IF YOU ARE TOSSED ABOUT AND AT YOUR WITS' END, THEN TAKE A DOSE OF -

Psalm 37:39 - *But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: he is their strength in the time of trouble.*

Yes, He is our Strength in time of trouble. This means that, if you are in trouble at this moment, the Lord will see you through.

Take a dose of that, and see if you do not feel better already. The Lord will never fail you nor forsake you. The Lord will never let you down or let you go.

Take a good dose of that and *calm down!*

LINKS IN A GOLDEN CHAIN

STUDY 9

Scripture Portion: Isaiah 42:1, 6-7

Isaiah 42:1 - *Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.*

Isaiah 42:6-7 - *I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; 7 To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.*

Here are five links in a golden chain. How wonderful it is that we, as Christians, are: *loved, called, held, kept, and used* by the Lord!

The primary application in this portion of scripture is “messianic.” It refers to our Lord Jesus Christ, the Servant of Jehovah. Through faith, we have been brought into union with Him. So it is gloriously true that what was said of Him in the word of prophecy is also true in our own experience.

1. WE ARE LOVED.

Isaiah 42:1 - *Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth;*
(loved).....

As we have noticed, these words primarily refer to the Lord Jesus. They declare the Father’s love for His Son, Who, five times, is described and identified by the apostle John as God’s only begotten Son.

But these words are also wonderfully true of us. It is hard to understand how God can love us when we have to say of ourselves what Job said of himself -

Job 40:4 - *Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.*

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

Nevertheless, such is the love and grace of God that He delights in us, not in our sin and unworthiness, but in the new position into which we have been brought through faith in

Christ, as those who have been clothed in His righteousness.

Isaiah 61:10 - *I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.*

There is surely great encouragement for us here. Often we are cast down and discouraged. Sometimes the devil tempts us to believe that, because of our unworthiness, God no longer loves us.

What a liar the devil is!

In our Lord's discourse in the Upper Room, John tells us that Jesus, knowing that soon He must depart out of this world, loved them to the end.

John 13:1 - *Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*

This means that He loved them all the way through. He loved failing Peter, doubting Thomas and His other disciples who all forsook Him and fled.

Hebrews 13:8 - *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.*

His love never changes, so we too can rejoice in God's great love.

2. WE ARE CALLED.

Isaiah 42:6 - *I the LORD have called thee in righteousness,.....*

This is very wonderful. It tells us that the Lord, Who has loved us from all eternity, calls us to put our trust in Him as our Lord and Saviour. He tells us that God has a plan and a purpose for our lives.

It was so in the case of the Lord Jesus. In eternity, He set Himself apart for redemption's work. We read that He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Revelation 13:8 - *And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*

In the voice of prophecy, we hear Him saying -

Psalms 40:7-8 - *Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me,*

8 I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.

Thus it was that, in the fulness of time, the Father sent the Son -

1 John 4:14 - *And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.*

and that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners -

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

When we first put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, we discover that God has not only loved us and saved us by His grace, but He has called us. He has called us first to salvation and then to service; to salvation for God has called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose.

2 Timothy 1:9 - *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,*

He has called us to service, for we read that He said -

John 15:15-16 - *Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.*

16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

We are often restricted in our concept that God's call is only to vocations that are strictly sacred.

For example, a man is called to be a minister, a girl is called to be a missionary, someone else is called to be an evangelist. What we need to remember is that God also calls His servants to be doctors, lawyers and architects.

He calls a vast number of women into the domestic sphere where they become home builders and child trainers.

The same Lord, Who called His Son to be our Redeemer, calls us, not only to salvation, but to the lifework of His choosing.

That work is found in the place where He has set us.

The most important thing for us is to discover and remain in the centre of God's will; to be in the place of His choice and doing the work that is pleasing to Him, whether it be in

the home, in an office, in a shop or in some far off mission field.

The first Christians were not professional evangelists. They were personal evangelists. Even Paul and Peter, who were leaders in the forward movement of the gospel, were not in any sense professional. They were filled with a passion to live for the Lord and to make Him known to as many people as possible.

That is how it should be in the church today and with ourselves. We should emulate the scattered disciples of whom we read in -

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

Many years ago, Dr. A. T. Person said, in reference to the rapid way in which the early church grew, that -

“Within one generation, with none of our modern facilities of communication and publicity, the gospel message flew from lip to lip until it touched the bounds of the Roman Empire. Within one century, by the simple method of one-by-one evangelism, the citadels of paganism were shaken to their foundations and the gospel spread on triumphantly!”

He then referred to the way in which the early Christians ‘gossiped the gospel.’ He said -

“Upon this primitive evangelism, God set His seal, confirming it with signs following, and adding to the church daily, so that the most rapid and far-reaching results ever known in history were achieved!”

3. WE ARE HELD.

Isaiah 42:6 - *I the LORD.....will hold thine hand,.....*

It is incredible, but true, that, though there are so many millions in God’s family, He holds my hands as if I were the only one loved by Him and called by Him!

More than that, the hand which holds me is His right hand.

He holds me with a right-hand hold so I am absolutely safe.

He says -

Isaiah 41:10 - *Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.*

We should cultivate the habit of remembering, and relying upon, this wonderful promise when we are faced with situations which we are unable to face and tasks which we are incapable of accomplishing in our own strength.

If we have to spend time in a hospital, for example, and we are fearful, then we should deliberately remind ourselves that God has said, "I will hold thine hand." If we rest quietly upon His promise and, by faith, feel the grasp of His hand, all fear will be banished.

Suppose we have to face a very difficult situation which involves an important interview concerning which we are quite frankly scared. As the time of the interview draws near, what should we do? We should get alone in the presence of the Lord and say to Him,

"Thank You, Lord, for holding my hand! I remember how comforted I was when, as a small child, my father held my hand..... And You are my loving heavenly Father. Let me, by faith, feel the grip of Your strong right hand on mine..... Thank You, Lord!"

By exercising faith in this way, that scared feeling, that apprehension, will be banished. I have proved it many, many times.

Maybe you are a preacher? Do you suffer from "pulpit fright?" What can you do about it?" Let me tell you out of my own experience.

At one time, I experienced this debilitating, nervous apprehension to such an extent that, long before the time came for me to preach, I was completely exhausted. Virtue did not go out of me as a result of my preaching, for I had lost my nervous energy before I ascended the pulpit steps!

On my first preaching tour many years ago, I suffered such apprehension that I visited a top diagnostician, a Christian man, for a complete physical checkup. After a thorough examination, he pronounced me one hundred percent fit.

He turned to me and said -

"I could give you something to take away these awful feelings of insecurity and apprehension which lay you low before you appear in public, but I am not going to do it! If I did, you would lose your sense of absolute dependence upon the Lord, which is essential to you if you are to be fruitful in His service!"

How ashamed I felt! Could I not acknowledge before the Lord that I believed whole heartedly that when I am weak, then am I strong?

2 Corinthians 12:10 - *Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.*

Could I not, at the same time trust Him to banish my fears so that I could go forth to serve Him confidently, in fulness of strength and with joy?

Yes, I could. The secret of my deliverance was very simple. I realized that the work in which I was engaged was not mine. It was His. I was only the instrument that He wanted to use. All I had to do was to make myself available to Him for Him to do His work through me.

In the context of the promise we are considering, all I had to do was quietly, by faith, to say - "Lord, there is a service this evening. There is a glorious opportunity for me to preach the Word. Let us go. And Lord, please hold my hand as You have promised to do!"

Did it work? Does it work?

Yes. It certainly does work!

4. WE ARE KEPT.

Isaiah 42:6 - *I the LORD.....will keep thee,.....*

It is wonderful to be held by the Lord. It is even more wonderful that His holding guarantees the responsibility of His keeping. It means that the One Who holds us assumes the responsibility of our life from beginning to end. He will keep us all the way through.

Philippians 1:6 - *Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:*

This assures us of our absolute security, as does the testimony of Paul, who said -

2 Timothy 4:18 - *And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

I frequently feel concerned because so many Christians seem to lack the assurance of salvation. They are filled with alarm and fear. It is, of course, the devil who is tempting them to believe that, after all, they are not saved.

Is it likely, is it possible, is it conceivable that God, Who has guaranteed to keep us and to bring us safely to our heavenly home, will break His Word?

If you have truly placed your faith in Christ alone for salvation but you have now lost your assurance, let me remind you of the words in -

Colossians 3:3 - *For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*

Let me remind you also of Jesus' prayer in -

John 17:11 - *And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come*

to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

Of course, I must remind you of -

John 10:28-29 - *And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.*

29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

On many occasions people have come to tell me that they believed they had committed the unpardonable sin. Thinking back over the years, I believe it would be true to say that there was not the slightest evidence that even one of them had done so.

In every case the devil had got at them and brought them into bondage. He had so succeeded in upsetting them that they had lost their assurance of salvation.

The sin for which there is no forgiveness is not adultery, theft or some wretched sexual sin. It is not some evil, impassioned or even blasphemous words which a man might utter in a time of stress and strain. It is not lying, deception, irritability, swearing or cursing.

The unpardonable sin is the sin against light. It is a deliberate, repeated, intentional, conscious rejection of truth, of the truth, the Lord Jesus Himself.

If you are guilty in that way, unless you are sick in mind (in which case the Lord will not hold you accountable) you may have committed the unpardonable sin. Of course, the sin of consciously and deliberately rejected Christ as your Lord and Saviour, is unpardonable. It must be so if you refuse the pardon which He offers to you.

How wicked the enemy is when he comes to God's children and tells them that God has cast them out!

They are kept, kept by the Lord and He will never let them go!

1 Peter 1:5 - *Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

I am so glad that we do not have to do the keeping, but that He does it, for He -

Jude 24 - *Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,*

In this He will not fail. Hallelujah!

5. FINALLY, WE ARE USED.

Isaiah 42:6-7 - *I the LORD will.....give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;*

7 To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.

God *loves* us. God *calls* us. He *holds* us by the hand. He *keeps* us. And, wonder of all wonders, His plan and purpose is that, while we are here on earth, He may *use* us in blessing to others.

Just as He gave His Son and sent Him into the world to be the Saviour, so likewise we have been given by Him and sent into the world to make His grace known to men and women. We know that this is true because Jesus said -

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

Theses were the words which God used to commission me to preach. Three days after I had come to know the Lord and had been brought into a full assurance of salvation, I was led to read the words of Jesus which are recorded in -

Luke 4:18-19 - *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,*

19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

I realized, of course, that the Lord was speaking of Himself, but suddenly He showed me that these words also had reference to myself, for He said to me, “As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.”

Almost immediately, He began to open doors of opportunity for me and I began to preach the gospel.

What a privilege it has been, and is to be, a preacher of the Word, to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ -

Ephesians 3:8 - *Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;*

and offer Him to sinners and to saints as their Saviour, Sanctifier, Lord and Master!

It is God's will to use us. In order that He may do so, we must yield ourselves whole heartedly to Him.

Indeed, in Francis Ridley Havergal's own words, we must come to the point where we can truthfully say to the Lord:

In full and glad surrender
I give myself to Thee,
Thine utterly and only
And evermore to be.

It is when we give ourselves to the Lord in full surrender that He takes us up and uses us to bring light to those who are in darkness and liberty to those who are in bondage.

What a glorious ministry this is!

THE FIVE BEHOLDS

STUDY 10

Scripture Portions: Psalm 51:5; John 1:29; Matthew 6:26; Revelation 3:8; 22:7

Look.....! Take note of this.....! Fix your attention upon this.....!

Upon what?

1. THE FIRST BEHOLD.....TAKES ALL MY PRIDE AWAY.

Psalm 51:5 - *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.*

It was David who wrote these words. He was not suggesting that there was anything irregular in connection with the manner of his birth. He was referring to the fact that he, in common with every other member of the human race, was born in sin with a nature that had a built-in tendency to do what was wrong.

He was acknowledging that he knew he was a sinner by birth and a sinner by practice. He was 'estranged from the womb.'

Psalm 58:3 - *The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.*

He was a sinner because of what he was, and because of what he did.

This is not a pleasant nor a popular truth, but God's Word tells us that our first parents sinned.

Romans 5:12 - *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:*

Every man and woman is, therefore, a sinner by birth and a sinner by practice. This is God's verdict concerning every person. It was true not only of David, but is true of you and of me.

Ecclesiastes 7:20 - *For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.*

Isaiah 53:6 - *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

Romans 3:23 - *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*

Galatians 3:22 - *But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.*

This truth certainly takes our pride away! Outwardly, we may be splendid people, but underneath we are like Naaman of old, 'a leper.'

2 Kings 5:1 - *Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper.*

Whoever we may be, whatever our heritage, our background or our achievements, we have absolutely nothing to boast about when we come into the presence of a holy God.

In His sight, we are sinners. Our hearts are -

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

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

and we are under His wrath -

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

Our greatest need, therefore, is for a Saviour, for someone who can remove the guilt and penalty of our sin and deliver us from its pollution and power.

Is there anyone, anywhere, who can do this?

Thank God, there is!

2. THE SECOND BEHOLD.....TAKES ALL MY SINS AWAY.

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

When John was baptizing in the river of Jordan, Jesus came to him and asked to be baptized. Immediately, John saw Jesus approaching, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

He also declared that Jesus was the 'Son of God.'

John 1:34 - *And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.*

Surely this was an amazing way to speak of the Son of God Who now appeared among men as the Son of Man! How strange to acclaim and introduce Him as 'the Lamb of God!'

What did John mean?

He meant that, in the Lord Jesus, all the Old Testament types and prophecies which pointed forward to the coming Sin-bearer had now found their fulfillment.

For centuries the Jews had celebrated the Passover Feast.

We are told in **Exodus 12**, that, through His servant Moses, the Lord had commanded them that they were to take 'a lamb for an house.'

Exodus 12:3 - *Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house:*

It was to be without blemish.

Exodus 12:5 - *Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats:*

Then the lamb was to be killed.

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

This was the 'Lord's Passover.'

Exodus 12:11 - *And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD'S passover.*

The Lord then told His people that, when He passed through the land in judgment, all who were within the houses where the blood of a lamb had been struck on the door posts would be safe.

He told them that the blood would be a 'token' and a 'promise' -

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

Now, this (to us) rather strange ordinance was in anticipation of the coming of the One Who was to be the Lamb of God, the One Who, by the shedding of His own blood, was to provide for all His people forgiveness, redemption, eternal life and freedom from God's judgment.

Thus, the apostle Paul refers to Jesus as 'Christ, our Passover,' -

1 Corinthians 5:7 - *Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:*

Peter says that we have been redeemed -

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

That was the only way in which sin could be dealt with, for Christ alone was qualified, by His sinless life and infinite love, to -

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

Hebrews 9:26 - *For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*

It was no after thought in the mind of God that Jesus should come to die and by His death atone for the sins of men. Indeed, He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Revelation 13:8 - *And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*

Have you ever read **Isaiah 53:5** and altered it to read like this?

"He was wounded for my transgressions, He was bruised for my iniquities: the chastisement of my peace was upon Him; and with His stripes I am healed."

By faith you can do this now. In so doing, you will know the pardoning, saving and delivering power of the blood of Christ. You will know the efficacy of the blood of Christ to cleanse you from all sin.

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.*

This is the only way by which a sinner can be saved, and by which anyone, anywhere, can know that all his sins have been taken away.

Acts 13:38-39 - *Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man*

is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins:

39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

What a wonderful Saviour He is!

Have you trusted Him?

3. THE THIRD BEHOLD.....TAKES ALL MY CARES AWAY.

Matthew 6:26 - *Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?*

What a challenge these words are!

If God is our heavenly Father, if He watches over the birds of the air, feeds and cares for them, and if we are of far greater value to Him than they are, is it conceivable that He will fail to take care of us?

What have we to be anxious about when we have such a loving Father to provide for us and to protect us? Yet it is unfortunately true to say that many Christians suffer from worry and anxiety and are constantly filled with fear.

How unreasonable, how wrong and how unnecessary this is!

Are you anxious about your future needs with regard to food, clothing, shelter.....?

Well, Jesus said -

Matthew 6:31-33 - *Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?*

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

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

We are indebted to Elizabeth Cheney for her delightful and telling lines -

Said the Robin to the Sparrow,
'I should really like to know
Why these anxious human beings
Rush about and worry so!'

Said the Sparrow to the Robin,
'Friend, I think that it must be
That they have no heavenly Father

Such as cares for you and me!

What an indictment upon those of us who call ourselves believers! If we are believers, or to use a better word, trusters, and if we are living by faith, for how much are we trusting?

Are we trusting God for forgiveness but not for food?

Are we trusting Him for our redemption but not for our retirement?

Are we trusting Him for our cleansing but not for the protection and care of our children?

A great word that has become increasingly meaningful to me over the years is -

1 Peter 5:7 - *Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.*

Have you learned to do this? Have you cast all your care, all the responsibilities of your life, your home, children, job and future, upon Him?

He cares for you. He invites you to allow Him to be not only your Sin-bearer but your Care-bearer.

Casting all your care upon Him is a matter of your taking, by faith, all the cares which are resting upon you and of transferring them over to Him.

Thus, if you have cast them from yourself onto Him, then you are left without a care in the world!

Yes. Jesus will take all our cares away if, in faith, we will commit ourselves and them to Him.

Here is the secret of knowing not only peace *with* God -

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

But the peace *of* God -

Philippians 4:7 - *And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

This is the perfect peace spoken of in -

Isaiah 26:3 - *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.*

Do you have this peace, this freedom from anxiety, worry and fear, this 'abundance of peace'-

Psalm 37:11 - *But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.*

If not, how is it that you have no faith?

Mark 4:40 - *And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?*

4. THE FOURTH BEHOLD.....TAKES ALL MY EXCUSES AWAY.

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.*

These words were spoken to the church at Philadelphia by the exalted Lord Jesus. But, in their application to the privilege and responsibility of Christian service, and of witnessing in particular, they are addressed to every believer.

There never was a day of greater opportunity for Christian service than this day in which we are living. Yet we make excuses for not serving the Lord!

Here, however, is a "behold" that takes all our excuses away because we can never tell ourselves at the beginning of any new day that, on that particular day, there is nothing we can do for the Lord.

Indeed, the Lord says to us at the beginning of every day, 'Behold I have set before thee an open door!'

When God said to Moses -

Exodus 3:10 - *Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.*

Moses replied -

Exodus 3:11 - *And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?*

But God brushed his excuse to one side and said -

Exodus 3:12 - *And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.*

Likewise, God spoke to Jeremiah and said -

Jeremiah 1:5-7 - *Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. 6 Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. 7 But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.*

In like manner, if the Lord commissions us to do something for Him and we make some excuse for not obeying Him, He will brush away our excuse. He will assure us that all His commands are His enablings. That is, if He sends us to do anything for Him, then He will give us all the grace, strength and wisdom we need in order to accomplish the task.

Some years ago I prepared and preached a Bible study which I entitled “No Excuse For Not Witnessing!” In it, I pointed out that, day by day, we are all faced with boundless opportunities for witnessing to the saving and the satisfying power of our Lord and Saviour.

Can you tell me of any place where it is not possible to live for the Lord?

Is it not true that almost everywhere it is possible, not only to live for Him, but also to speak for Him?

One Christian witnessed for Christ while she was having a Turkish bath. Another witnessed while he was sightseeing down a coal mine. Another witnessed while he was in a doctor’s waiting room. Another witnessed while he was traveling on a bus. Another witnessed to the tradesmen who called at her door. Another witnessed to every person who telephoned her number in error. Another witnessed while she was in the hospital. Another.....well, the opportunities are unending!

Notice that we do not have to create such opportunities. The Holy Spirit creates them for us. If we are walking in close fellowship with Him we will recognize the open door when it appears.

I know a little lady who, at the beginning of each day, prays “Lord, I give You my tongue. Please bring someone to me today to whom I can speak a word for you!” Very rarely does she return home from a shopping expedition without having had some very worthwhile encounter with a needy soul.

It would be easy for her to make excuses for not speaking for she is of a quiet, retiring nature. But the Lord takes her at her word and creates the opportunities for her. How He has used her!

The devil, of course, is the one who puts excuses into our minds. “Do not speak to him

just now,” he says. “You will do more harm than good! Leave it until some other time! Just pray for her, that will be better than embarrassing her by talking to her about Christ!”

Every excuse we make for not serving God, for not witnessing for Him, for not obeying the great commission, for not doing His will, comes from the devil!

Here is a practical suggestion.

Make a list of your ten most “wanted” people, the ten people in your family circle or your circle of friends whom you most want to see brought to Christ.

Keep this list in your Bible. Use it as a prayer list and then seek ways by prayer and by personal contact, by love and kindness, by word of mouth, by letter and by every way open to you of winning them for the Lord.

Having put this suggestion into effect, take care that you do not make any excuse for not following it up!

The Lord says -

5. THE FIFTH BEHOLD.....JESUS IS COMING AGAIN!

Revelation 22:7 - *Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.*

Yes, and when He comes, two very wonderful things will happen.

1. All believers who have died prior to His coming will be raised from their graves and **will receive their new bodies.**

1 Corinthians 15:51-54 - *Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,*

52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

2. Every living believer will be caught up to meet the Lord.

They will be changed and receive their new bodies.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 - *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:*

17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

So whether I die before the Lord comes, or whether I am alive on earth when He comes, His coming will take me away! I have always found the scriptures very clear about this truth.

Two passages in particular refer in detail to the Lord's second advent and to what that will mean for those who are Christ's at His coming.

1 Corinthians 15:23 - *But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.*

When I have been preaching on the subject of the second coming, I have sometimes illustrated this event by asking the audience to imagine a pile of steel filings and a pile of wood shavings mixed together on a table.

I have then asked, "What would happen if I lowered a powerful magnet over the table?"

The answer is obvious. All the steel filings would suddenly be caught up to meet the magnet in the air, but all the wood shavings would be left behind!

This is very solemn, but it is true. When Jesus comes, all His people will go to be with Him for ever. But, every unbeliever will be left behind!

The next great event in this world's history may be the return of the Saviour. So if Jesus should come today, would you go to be with Him or would you be left behind?

The day of grace is still here. The Lord's last invitation recorded in the Bible is still open to everyone who will respond to it.

Revelation 22:17 - *And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*

I am so glad that, when I read -

Revelation 22:7 - *Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.*

and hear my Lord say, "Behold, I come quickly,"

I can rejoice that this promise is His guarantee that, when He comes, He will take me away to be with Him to live for ever with Him in Immanuel's Land.

Are you rejoicing in this too?

THE WORKER'S CONFSSION
or
THE CHRISTIAN'S CONFSSION
STUDY 11
Scripture Portion: Psalm 22:6

Psalm 22:6 - *But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.*

Here was a man who felt himself to be like a worm. That was his estimate of himself. What is our estimate of ourselves? What do we really think of ourselves?

This is very important.

However, let us not get into a big hurry to answer that question. If someone called you a worm, you might very well be upset with them for doing so.

But what does God say about it? How do you feel about this?

As a matter of fact, God's estimate of us is that we are like worms in His sight. The trouble is that we do not very easily accept what God says.

We all like to think about ourselves as important, attractive and very adequate. But God says, "No, you are a worm! You are very small, feeble and puny. By nature you are like a worm.....full of moral corruption."

God says in -

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

It is often hard and very difficult to accept the description of ourselves because we are often full of pride and ourselves. What we need to cultivate is the Christlikeness of godly humility that, in ourselves, we are nothing, and that we need to get down at the feet of Jesus.

When we get down at Jesus' feet, He will say to us like He said to Jacob of old in -

Isaiah 41:14 - *Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.*

What a glorious word this is. It is a word that comes to us as we get down at His feet and admit our unloveliness and our unworthiness.

What does God promise to do for worms -- for His own people who will recognize their weakness and their utter poverty of spirit?

HE CARES FOR WORMS.

Isaiah 41:14 - *Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.*

This man Jacob was just as a worm in God's sight -- and yet the Lord promised to help him.

Who is the God Who promises to help this worm? He is, according to this verse, "the Holy One of Israel."

Is that all?

Look again at that verse. He is "thy Redeemer." This should fill our hearts with love, wonder and praise.

We are so insignificant in ourselves, yet the Lord thinks upon us. He really thinks of us -- so much so that He has become our Redeemer. He shed His blood and died in our stead to save and deliver us from sin, death, hell and Satan.

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:

How much the Lord really loved and cared for us to send us a Saviour and a Redeemer, to redeem a worm like you and me.

Oh yes, He cares for worms. Say "Amen, somebody!"

GOD SPEAKS TO WORMS.

Isaiah 41:14 - *.....saith the LORD,.....*

Does God speak to worms? If so, what does He say?

Think for a moment of Him, the great Creator, the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, the High and Lofty One. Does He really speak to a worm? Does He?

Yes! Yes, He does! Believe me. He does!

Here are His words to you and to me, "Fear not," to banish all fear and to give a word of promise to help us.

He says, "Fear not, I will help thee."

It is always when we come to the end of ourselves that He can, and will, come and help us, when we cry out to Him.

If you are in need of help right now, call upon Him. He has promised to help you whatever your need might be, big or small.

If you come as a worm, rejoice in this, that God not only loves and cares for worms, but that He speaks to worms as well.

3. GOD TRANSFORMS WORMS.

To whom is **Isaiah 41:14** speaking?

It is addressed to Jacob. Jacob was his real name. It was Jacob whom the Lord changed and transformed and later renamed Israel.

Read **Genesis 32:24-30**.

What a word picture of the power of God and His gospel to change and transform lives like yours and mine.

This is what the Lord wants to do for all His dear children.

Moses.

Deuteronomy 34:10-12 - *And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face,
11 In all the signs and the wonders, which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land,
12 And in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel.*

b. Jonah.

Jonah 3:1-2 - *And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying,
2 Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.*

3. Peter.

Luke 22:32 - *But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*

d. **Paul.**

Acts 9:1 - *And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,*

Acts 9:5-6 - *And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*

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.*

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

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

4. David.

Acts 13:22 - *And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.*

God can take a Jacob and turn him into an Israel. God transforms worms!

4. THE LORD USES WORMS.

Isaiah 41:15-17 - *Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff.*

16 *Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the LORD, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.*

17 *When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.*

God the Lord is still speaking to His people whom He calls Jacob, the worm. He is telling them that, although they are insignificant little worms, He will make of them an instrument in His hands. Through them He will do great and mighty things to glorify His Name.

You might think of yourself as a worm, as a nobody. Maybe you are nothing in yourself. Perhaps you wonder what there is in this life for you.

Hear the word of the Lord to your heart.

God will, and God is able to make of you an instrument in His hands to do His mighty acts and deeds.

This is what Paul meant in the following scriptures.

2 Corinthians 3:5-6 - *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;*

6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

2 Corinthians 4:7 - *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*

It takes us a long time to learn this lesson. We are only the instruments in His hands. He is the Worker.

The Lord can take your life, be it so weak and insignificant, and work out of and through you.

He can, and will, do great and mighty things to glorify His great and holy Name.

John 3:30 - *He must increase, but I must decrease.*

1 Peter 5:5-6 - *Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*

6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

5. GOD EXALTS WORMS.

Isaiah 41:16-17 - *Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the LORD, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.*

17 When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.

It is a great moment in the life of a child of God when he realizes his union with the Lord.

Ephesians 2:6 - *And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:*

Compare with -

Isaiah 33:16 - *He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.*

Then, and only then, is he willing to be lost sight of and to let the Lord have complete authority in every part of his being.

In closing, notice also the words in -

Psalms 22:6 - *But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.*

These are words which refer to Jesus Himself Who was willing to so completely identify with us in our littleness, our weakness and our moral corruption (though He Himself knew no sin) in order that we might be lifted up.

Let the Lord lift you up and cause His Name to be worshiped and praised through you.

Alas, and did my Saviour bleed?
And did my Sovereign die?
Would He devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?

Was it for crimes that I had done,
He groaned upon the tree?
Amazing pity! grace unknown!
And love beyond degree!

THE HAPPY MAN

STUDY 12

Scripture Portion: Psalm 32:1

The word “blessed” in the Psalms has the thought of “happiness.”

Psalm 32:1 - *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.*

It is important that God’s people remain happy, but sometimes Christians get cold in heart and need restoration. The longer one is saved, the more necessary it becomes to keep happy in the Lord.

In **Revelation 2**, Christ is speaking to the church of Ephesus. He had much to commend them for - their works, labor and patience. But He had to say -

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

The meaning of first love is the same as we have in **Luke 15**, concerning the prodigal son.

Luke 15:22 - *But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:*

So here we see that first love is our best love. Each of us knows whether we are giving the Lord our best.

1. THE HAPPY MAN IS A SAVED MAN.

There is no happiness until first one’s sins are forgiven.

Psalm 32:1 - *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.*

Romans 4:8 - *Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*

This is what salvation means.

A conviction of sin is necessary before a person can be saved.

Forgiveness of sins is -

The primary blessing.

It comes first and is a perfect blessing.

Ephesians 1:7 - *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;*

It is a personal blessing.

John writes -

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

c. Furthermore, this blessing is priceless.

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:

5. It is also a very productive blessing.

When your sins are forgiven, joy and love for God are produced.

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

Peter writes -

1 Peter 1:8 - *Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:*

While this is all true, there remains the possibility of getting away from God and falling into sin. The joy of salvation is lost as well as the confidence we once had in witnessing for Christ.

David says -

Psalms 32:6 - *For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found:.....*

It is necessary for one who is away from God to get right with God.

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.*

2. THE HAPPY MAN IS A SEPARATED AND SATISFIED MAN.

Psalm 1:1 - *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.*

Not only is the happy man a man whose sins are forgiven, but he is a separated man.

Hebrews 7:26 - *For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;*

speaks of the Lord Jesus Who was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.

The man of **Psalm one** is not walking in the counsels of the ungodly nor taking advice from the unsaved, nor stumbling anyone by being in the company of the scornful.

We have different associations from which God's people are called to be separated, including those in the religious world, business and social world, and in marriage.

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

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

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

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

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

If God's people drift into unequal yokes with the unconverted in any way, it will bring them down and take away their joy. They are not going to delight in the law of God.

The Children of Israel were not to sow their fields with divers seeds.

Deuteronomy 22:9 - *Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds:.....*

This would speak of a mixture of doctrine and tradition. We are not to mix man's tradition with God's Word.

Then, we are not to plow with an ox yoked to an ass.

Deuteronomy 22:10 - *Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together.*

The ass was an unclean animal and the ox was a clean animal. This teaches us not to

group together in business with the unconverted.

We learn that our behavior or conduct is important. We are not to be holy on the Lord's Day only and the rest of the week, for every day is an holy day.

There should be no difference in our conduct from day to day.

The separated man is a man that is separated unto the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Separation should be taught to all persons when first saved so that they are not left in the world but gathered together -

2 Peter 1:1 - *.....to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:*

as a testimony to the Lord Jesus.

The happy man's delight is -

Psalm 1:2 - *.....in the law of the LORD;.....*

He is also a studious man for -

Psalm 1:2 - *.....and in his law doth he meditate day and night.*

Paul's instruction to Timothy was -

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.*

3. THE HAPPY MAN IS A STEADFAST MAN.

Read **Psalm 84**.

This psalm was written for the sons of Korah. They did not perish with their father who had rebelled against God's order.

Read **Numbers 16:1-33**.

These sons had become the song leaders and the doorkeepers in the temple.

In this psalm, they are rejoicing in the house of God, saying -

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

Psalm 84:4-5 - *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.*

5 Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them.

In **verse 5**, the marginal reading of “the way” is the “highway to Zion.”

The assembly is that highway. The assembly becomes part of our life and we company with those who gather in the Name of the Lord Jesus.

4. THE HAPPY MAN IS THE SOWER OF THE GOOD SEED.

Isaiah 32:20 - *Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass.*

Sowing the seed of the gospel will keep us happy in the Lord.

Psalm 126:6 - *He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.*

The happy man is a busy man, spreading the gospel to souls as he comes into contact with them.