

Sincere Best Wishes,
J. Ridley Strop.

God's Plan and Me

BOOK I

JESUS' MISSION AND METHOD

J. RIDLEY STROOP

Author of

Why Do People Not See the Bible Alike?

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

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DEDICATION

THIS BOOK is sincerely and prayerfully dedicated to every honest person who is earnestly seeking the truth of his God and whose sincerity inclines him to pause here and pray that what he may glean from the thoughts that follow may lead him more fully into the truth and that he may be guarded against any distracting or misleading influence that may be hidden among them.

FOREWORD

THROUGH MANY YEARS of study and teaching of both psychology and the Bible I have been impressed with the close relationship between the two. I have found the Bible, especially the New Testament, to be the greatest and most practical book of applied psychology that has ever been produced. This may sound a little strange, but when we recall that it was provided by "Him who made man" and "who is acquainted with all of his ways" as a guide for man's best development and for the purpose of preparing him to fulfill a greater mission, we should expect it to be the best source book for information on the principles which man's Maker imbedded in his nature. To be sure the principles are not described and analyzed in the Bible, but are presented in personal application.

With the conviction that a study of God's teaching as it is related to man's nature would give present-day civilization a better understanding of the Bible, in the school year 1940-41, I began a Bible course at David Lipscomb College entitled, "The Psychology of the New Testament." This was not a technical course from the standpoint of psychology but a practical analysis of some of the New Testament teaching that would lead people to understand that it is not a mere compilation of arbitrary demands decreed by a God who had the power and authority to do so, as a test of man's submission to him; but a teaching that was carefully adjusted to man's nature and needs by an all-wise and loving Creator "who

would have all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.”

A course of this sort was not needed in America fifty years ago but since that time a very critical attitude toward the Bible has arisen among a large percentage of our population under the encouragement of avowed enemies of Christianity who in their ignorance have branded its teaching “religious dogma.” Doubtless many factors have contributed to this situation but there is one that seems to be more basic than the others. It is the divergence between the mode of thinking that people have acquired and that which is employed in dealing with religion. From early childhood people have been trained to see a reason in what they do and give a reason to justify what they say, while the major part of religious teaching is fragmentary being largely detached from any general organization of thought, presented as decrees made without purpose when measured in terms of human needs and supported solely, or largely, by the thought that they must be practiced if one is to enter into glory. Now it is true that God’s teaching must be honored and practiced and that it is in no case subject to modification through human reason but that does not necessitate or justify its being presented in such a manner as to appear irrational. It is a teaching provided for intelligent people but not a product of human wisdom. Its whole foundation lies in the fact that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ the Son of God, which can only be established by faith, but when this fact is fully accepted every thing that man is asked to do is completely in keeping with

intelligent reasoning based upon the facts revealed through Christ. And every fact that man is called upon to believe has its influence in the life of him who believes it.

Since man has learned something about the principles of human nature why should he not learn that God in his wisdom knew and used them from the beginning? Why should he not understand the effectiveness and practical nature of God's teaching instead of enveloping it in mystery and mysticism and dealing with it in such a way that the present analytical mind is caused to think of it as irrational dogma and refuse to honestly consider it? Why should the impression be given that its purpose is only to cause man to seek to do certain things instead of learning to be the kind of person who would not only do but who would find joy in doing what God would have him do? The hope of this course is to aid in accomplishing the latter.

The material has continued to be taught and continued to expand. It now consists of three quarter courses with two class periods per week, each bearing its respective title. The over-all title has been changed to GOD'S PLAN AND ME to more properly designate its religious character. My students have repeatedly urged me to print the material which I have agreed to do. This book presents the first quarter's course with the hope that more will come later.

It is with gratitude that I acknowledge valuable contributions to my training and Bible knowledge by a host

of esteemed associates including my patient instructors; and also helpful encouragement from many friends including the students in my Bible classes. I am especially appreciative of the patient untiring efforts of Miss Rachel Alexander in checking the references and preparing the manuscript.

THE AUTHOR

PART I
INTRODUCTION

The first section of this course considers the facts suggested in the title in an effort to provide the student with a point of view that is not only vital to this course but is also very important to an understanding of the Bible. It also examines a few of the basic facts about God that the student may become conscious of the overpowering influence of God's teaching in the lives of all those who accept it as the truth and deal with its facts as living realities.

LESSON 1

THE TITLE

This title has been chosen as the general subject for this series of lessons because of its suggestive value. It reminds us of two facts that should always be a part of our thinking when we are engaged in studying the Bible. These facts will aid us in establishing and maintaining the proper point of view or perspective from which we may be able to get a correct understanding of the divine teaching and certainly there should be no other purpose for studying it.

We should not forget how vitally one's point of view affects one's understanding, or what we see in a thing, or of a thing. This is illustrated by the varying phases of the moon. When we are seeing it from the edge, it appears as a narrow crescent and we call it the new moon. When our viewpoint gives us the full surface picture, we see it as a great disc and call it the full moon. Similarly, if we look at the edge of a dime, we see very little in comparison to what we see from a front view. Also, if we look at an object that is between us and the light, we see it dimly, or many times we see only the bare outline of it; but if we view it from the side from which the light is coming, we are able to get a full detailed picture of it. What is true of physical objects is also true in a large degree with respect to our understanding of God's word. Too fre-

quently do we see the lessons very poorly, very distortedly, or only in dim outline because of our incorrect point of view.

The idea suggested first in our title is very vital to a proper understanding of the truth. "God's Plan" simply means that the plan or the teaching is God's; that the lessons originated with him; that they partake of his nature and are divine. Certainly this is the kind of teaching that we all want. This is the very quality that makes the teaching peculiar or different. It is different from all human teachings because it comes from a different source; it is of divine origin. Paul reminds us of the fact that man had no part in providing this teaching when he asks the questions, "For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?" (Rom. 11:34). Since God thus provided the plan without the aid of man and has never delegated to man the privilege of injecting his own ideas into it, we should be exceedingly careful to remember that it is God's plan and that we should treat it as such.

The need for emphasis on this point is evident in the increasing number of differences in interpretations of Bible teachings, both denominational and individual. With the passing of time, the religious groups with their respective distinctive teachings have become more numerous. Also the members of these various religious groups are becoming more individual in the ideas that they hold. To state this last another way, there are few people in many religious groups who subscribe universally to all the

points of doctrine generally held by their respective groups. This means that not only is liberty being taken from group to group, but the privilege of variation is being taken by the members within the group. The fact that more than two hundred and fifty religious groups are taking this liberty and literally thousands of individuals are doing the same, does not make the matter any less serious. The practice of human beings never changes God's teaching. So let us remember that it is God's plan and that the one sure way to honor him is to learn his precepts and follow them implicitly.

During his personal ministry, Jesus bore testimony time and again to the fact that the teaching was the Father's and that his work was to do the Father's will. He declared, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work" (John 4:34). And again, "I can of myself do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is righteous; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 5:30). When the Jews marveled at his teaching, "Jesus therefore answered them, and said, My teaching is not mine, but his that sent me" (John 7:16). To the Jews who had rejected him Jesus said, "I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you: howbeit he that sent me is true; and the things which I heard from him, these speak I unto the world. They perceived not that he spake to them of the Father. Jesus therefore said, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself, but as the Father taught me, I speak these things" (John 8:26-28). And again he said to them,

“For I spake not from myself; but the Father that sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life eternal; the things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto me, so I speak” (John 12:49-50). To his disciples he said, “The words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth his works” (John 14:10). And also, “He that loveth me not keepeth not my words: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s who sent me” (John 14:24). In his prayer just before going to Gethsemane on the night of his betrayal he said, “Now they know that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are from thee: for the words which thou gavest me I have given unto them” (John 17:7-8). Thus Jesus made it plain to us that he was teaching exactly what God had given him to teach. Since the Son of God was careful to do this, how much more careful should we be who are beset with so many of the weaknesses of the flesh.

Our subject, GOD’S PLAN AND ME, not only indicates that the plan is God’s but reminds us of its personal character: that it concerns me. It is not written to people collectively, but individually. It is addressed to each one personally, and if it is ever to accomplish its mission, it must be accepted as a personal message. It is true that some of the New Testament books are addressed to churches, but the very nature of their content shows unmistakably that the term “church” is not being used in an organizational sense, but simply to describe or designate the people of a community who have accepted the teach-

ings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Each man will be judged by his own deeds, "Who will render to every man according to his works" (Rom. 2:6), not by the deeds of the group or church of which he is a member.

Our subject should not only suggest the personal nature of God's plan but its practical nature. In fact, no teaching is truly practical that is not personal, and no teaching should be taken as personal that is not practical. If anyone is to understand God's teaching, or hope to enjoy the promises contained therein, he must come to realize that it is addressed to him personally and not to his neighbor. It must be approached with the question, what must *I* do? and not, what must my neighbor do? It is true that one's personal duties and responsibilities are not neglectful of his neighbor's interest, but we must not allow our perspective to become so distorted as to forget that our obligation to teach others is not the prime purpose of Christian effort but that it is only one among many personal responsibilities. We should also recognize the fact that when we become forgetful in our application of the teaching to our own lives we disqualify ourselves as teachers of others. We should be reminded frequently of Paul's admonition to Timothy, "Take heed to thyself, and to thy teaching" (I Tim. 4:16).

In his direct teaching against judging others, Jesus warned against this practice of neglecting ourselves and being concerned about the failures of others. "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you. And why beholdest thou the

mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me cast out the mote out of thine eye; and lo, the beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye" (Matt. 7:1-5). Here is a most graphic picture of the thoughtlessness and unreasonableness of engaging in such activity. Can we conceive of a greater absurdity than the one portrayed in this picture?—a man with a veritable beam in his eye that has evidently destroyed his sense of vision is asking his brother, whom he loves, to let him cast a speak out of his eye. Certainly our Saviour did not intend to tell us that we should not help our brother remove from his life that which is unseemly until we have arrived at perfection, but rather to tell us that we should set the example; that we should apply the teaching to our own lives just as carefully as we would apply it to the lives of others; that we must become spiritual before we can help others effectively.

This is not only true of God's teaching which has been revealed through the Lord Jesus Christ, but has always been true of God's teachings in the past. They have always been addressed to people individually and personally. Noah received the instruction given to him as personal and planned his life accordingly. Abraham received what was given unto him as personal teaching and followed it implicitly, even to binding his only son, through whom the promise was to be fulfilled, and placing him upon the altar. David, the man after God's own heart, received

God's teaching personally; of this we have abundant testimony in the book of Psalms. He tells us in the first Psalm that the man who is blessed or happy is the one whose "delight is in the law of Jehovah and on his law doth he meditate day and night" (Ps. 1:2). This is just as true today as it was the day that David wrote it. God's teaching must be taken as personal teaching and we as individuals must find delight in his law; and when we do, we will meditate on it day and night. Again David declared, "The Lord is my shepherd" (Ps. 23:1). For the Lord to be his shepherd, he must be led by the Lord; fully under his guidance and influence, looking to him for help and protection. Where can we find a figure that indicates a more personal relationship. David also declared, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps. 119:105).

Are we receiving the word of God in this personal way today? Has it come to be as personal to us as it was to David? The law of Jehovah can only become a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path when we make it our personal guide; when its instruction shows us the way; when we make it our daily purpose to walk in the footsteps of Jesus who sets the example for us to follow.

Not only did Noah, Abraham and David receive God's teaching as a personal teaching, but Moses, Elijah and the other faithful people of earlier days did likewise. In fact, it was the failure to do such that brought grief and destruction to hundreds of thousands of people who had the privilege of being God's people in the days of old. If this was true of them, how much more will it be true of the

people of this generation. The writer of the Hebrew letter reminds us of this, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard; God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will" (Heb. 2:1-4).

One might ask the question: "Why should we think that people are not accepting God's teaching personally?" The answer is simple. A large percentage of the people who theoretically accept the Bible fail to make an honest effort to live in keeping with its truths; fail to allow themselves to come under the real influence of Christian teaching; fail to find that joy in Christian living which everyone should find, and everyone will find, whose delight is in the law of Jehovah. There are too many people who call themselves Christians who are perfectly content apparently to stake their future upon the virtue of church membership. It seems sometimes that "churchanity" is far more popular than Christianity. For some reason, it seems that many people have come to think of the church as an organization that has been endowed with some supernatural power through which and by which it is the savior of the souls of men. If this is the idea that you have, it is evident that you have not meditated on the law of

Jehovah day and night. The church is not the savior. Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God is the Savior of the world. The church is simply made up of those people who have accepted Jesus as their Savior; who have been purified by his blood through their faith in him that is manifested in their obedience to him; having pledged themselves to take him as their Lord and let his light shine through their lives that others may be led to honor and glorify God. Those of the church that eventually enter into glory will be those who serve Jesus faithfully in learning and following his teaching. Yes, Jesus' teaching is personal and if we will receive it that way, seeking to know what he would have us to do, we may be able to understand and follow his teaching.

So, as we continue with this series of lessons, if we are serious about the salvation of our own souls and the good of our fellows, then let us make every reasonable effort to leave every other human being out of our thinking, except ourselves, until the teaching which we are studying directs our thought toward others. May I never forget that the teaching is personal. "One thing is needful" (Luke 10:42) to me. I need to sit at Jesus' feet and hear his word (Luke 10:39). I must forgive if I would be forgiven (Matt. 6:14-15). I should "pray without ceasing" (I Thess. 5:17). I should "abhor that which is evil: cleave to that which is good" (Rom. 12:9). I should learn "to speak evil of no man, not to be contentious, to be gentle, showing all meekness toward all men" (Titus 3:2). I should "hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Matt. 5:6), and be "zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). In fact, if I am not earnestly

and prayerfully trying to do these things and many others I should be ashamed to lay claim to being a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. When I read, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12), I should recognize that that means me. It was written to Christians and if I am one I must work out my own salvation; there is no one to do it for me. It is true that God worketh in me (Phil. 2:13) if I allow him to abide in me through his word, but he does not work out my salvation in someone else when I refuse to give serious effort to following his teaching.

It shall be the purpose throughout these lessons to keep the emphasis where God has placed it. In viewing the teaching from the standpoint of the teaching itself, it is Christ-centered. May we not forget that Christ spake with authority, and that it is our privilege to learn and to obey, not to criticize and to change. In viewing the teaching from the standpoint of application, the hearer should find it egocentric; that is, he should find himself as the center. I am to apply it to myself. It is most important, however, that we do not mix these two points of view. They are properly expressed in our title, GOD'S PLAN AND ME. The plan is God's and ever should be. It is for me if I will only receive it as it is and be guided by its teaching.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON 1

1. Why was this title selected?
2. How will the two facts suggested in this title help us to get a better understanding of the Bible teaching?
3. How is the importance of one's point of view illustrated?
4. What idea is suggested in the first part of our title?
5. What questions does Paul ask that remind us that man had no part in providing this teaching?
6. What two facts should cause us to be careful to remember that it is God's plan?
7. What makes it evident that we need to emphasize this point?
8. Why does the fact that so many people are taking liberties with God's word not make the matter any less serious?
9. Quote some expressions from Jesus that show that he respected it as God's plan.
10. What influence should Jesus' example have upon us?
11. How is God's plan addressed, and how must it be accepted?
12. What is designated by the word "church" in the addresses of the New Testament letters?
13. State the relation between the practical and the personal.
14. What question expresses this personal concern?
15. How can we disqualify ourselves as teachers of others?
16. Of what admonition to Timothy should we be frequently reminded?
17. Give Jesus' picture that portrays the thoughtlessness and unreasonableness of one's forgetting his own failures and condemning others?
18. What statements show us that David took God's teaching personally?
19. When only can God's law become a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path?
20. To whom did the failure to take God's teaching personally bring destruction in the Old Testament days?
21. What comparison does the writer of Hebrews make to encourage us to make personal application of Jesus' teaching?
22. Give evidence that people are not accepting God's teaching personally today?

23. What is not the saviour of the world?
24. What are we advised to do as we proceed in this study if we are serious about the salvation of our own souls?
25. Give a few of the teachings that are mentioned that we should accept as being personal.
26. In viewing the teaching from the standpoint of the teaching itself, what is the center?
27. In viewing the teaching from the standpoint of application, what is the center?
28. What should we be careful not to mix?

LESSON 2

A GOD OF POWER

As we proceed with this discussion we should keep in mind the two important facts discussed in the former lesson. It is God's plan and I should be careful not to modify it in any way. It is for me personally, to be respected by me, to be applied in my own life, to be my own rule of practice. In order that I may better understand and more fully accomplish this, it is imperative that I know God as he is revealed in the Bible and give this knowledge a vital place in my thinking. With this purpose in mind it appears that attention should be given next to a few cardinal facts about God. They are simple facts, plainly stated. They are facts which all who consider the Bible as God's teaching accept, theoretically at least. But this is not enough, they must be received as reality; they must become living facts with me and with you; they must come to rule in our lives and be evident to others through our daily activities. Let us examine them now and see wherein they have real power with us if we truly believe them.

The God of the Bible is presented to us as an all-powerful God. This is abundantly proclaimed throughout the record of both the Old Testament and the New. And even those who readily accept the fact will do well to give careful thought to this body of material repeatedly. How-

ever, since it is not our purpose to prove it to him who doubts, but rather to help him who believes to evaluate it and to encourage him to prove his faith by his actions, we shall consider only a few statements from the New Testament record. As evidence of God's power we are pointed to the works of creation. "For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse" (Rom. 1:20). "And to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which for ages hath been hid in God who created all things" (Eph. 3:9). Such statements make the issue between the materialist and one who believes the Bible unmistakable and clear-cut. When Paul states that God created all things and that his everlasting power and divinity are shown in the creation, while the materialist declares that the creation is the result of natural physical forces, the contradiction is unmistakable. There certainly can be no agreement.

There is no desire to discuss here the details of any of the materialistic theories of creation. Regardless of what theory one accepts when the question, "What caused this?" or, "where did this come from?" is continually pressed, the one supplying the answers is eventually forced to the answer, "I do not know." The person who accepts the Bible statement of creation is likewise forced to the same answer. He can answer very readily that God created all things but when asked, "From whence is God?" his answer must be, "I do not know." Since the leaders of materialistic thought are highly trained in the field of

science, some have assumed that it is a reflection upon one's intelligence and education to accept the idea that God created the world. We see, however, from the statement just made that man is able to follow his wisdom through what seems to be a series of causes and effects but is eventually forced to base it all upon an assumption. Can there be anything more praiseworthy in building a system of theories and hypotheses which eventually brings one to the answer, "I do not know," than being willing to accept the idea of an all-powerful God who stands as the great creative force and the architect of fate? When the matter is considered from this point of view, it is evident that accepting God as the creator of the universe casts no reflection upon one's education or intelligence.

The scientist, by his science, cannot say that there is no God. To arrive at the conclusion, he must go beyond his science, which act disqualifies him as a scientist. To reject the idea of God, or the idea that man has an eternal soul because science has been unable to measure, weigh, or otherwise contact the thing physically, is a violation of the basic principle of science. The absence of evidence, scientifically, can only lead to an absence of conclusion. The one who dares make such a conclusion is forced to the assumption that science in its present state of development is in possession of every possible method developed to its highest possible state of efficiency, for the study of all problems, both physical and metaphysical. Thus any man who would claim to be a scientist, or, to quote the field of science, who proposes to draw his conclusion that there is no God or that man does not have an eternal

soul, has stepped out of the realm of science. It appears to be nothing short of evading the question when man declares there is no God or soul because he has failed in his narrow and limited field of work with his material method to discover such. In fact, such reasoning can accomplish but one thing, and that is to cast a reflection upon the one who would propose to use it. Yes, the Bible presents our God as an all-powerful being, and we should see this power in the works of the creation.

These conflicting ideas suggest man's greatest asset and also man's greatest pitfall. Human intelligence is a wonderful thing, but likewise, wonderfully dangerous. When man arrives at the place where he feels that he must be able to give an explanation for everything and is embarrassed by the failure to do so, his self-evaluation has become highly exaggerated, and his reasoning has deteriorated to the level of mere rationalization. In the study of the Bible, one should recognize the limits of human power and be ready on many occasions to answer, "I do not know," otherwise, he may find himself attempting the impossible. A little story which I read, or heard somewhere several years ago, might serve to make the point more impressive. As the story goes, a gentleman with a highly trained mind who had spent the major part of his life in quest of knowledge, was walking along the seashore. Such surroundings naturally provided him an atmosphere of meditation. However, his thinking was distracted by the gleeful laughter of a group of children who were playing near the water's edge. They were as busy as ants. They had gathered up shells from the sea-

shore and were running to and fro, dipping up water from the ocean, carrying it out upon the shore and pouring it out. When the man approached the group he spoke to the children and asked, "What are you doing here?" He received the answer, "We are pouring the ocean into this horse track." Upon hearing their reply, the man's thinking chanced to revert to himself, and he said to himself as he passed on, "That is just what I am trying to do. I am trying to pour the ocean of God's infinity into my finite mind." How true this may be of many of us, and how dangerous such a practice might become, and how opposite and antagonistic to that magnificent trait of Christian humility. May we never forget that human wisdom is far inferior to divine wisdom. May we learn to stop when revelation stops.

Another evidence of God's power is provided in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. "Having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places" (Eph. 1:18-20). This one should certainly be final to everyone who believes the Bible for it is a foundation fact of the gospel and its certainty is stressed to the Corinthians by Paul in these words, "And if Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (I Cor. 15:17).

Yes, the God of the Bible is a God of power. If we

accept this idea in sincerity, and give it a vital place in our thinking, what effect would it have in our lives? How would it affect me? In the first place, it is the chief cornerstone in the attitude of worship. Since worship is the expression of an attitude, the attitude of reverence, without this attitude there can be no true worship. The acts of worship are acts of praise and honor, but if they are not sincere expressions of the attitude of the heart, they not only may constitute mere forms, but hypocrisy. There is probably nothing that is more distasteful to either man or God, than insincere praise. There is probably nothing in the common happenings among men that gives one greater joy, than the sincere praise of his fellows. On the other hand, there are few things more disgusting than empty words of praise. They not only belittle the person to whom they are offered, but their falsity disqualifies the source from which they come. It is doubtful that we realize the seriousness of worship. It would be far better not to worship than to offer God a worship that is an abomination in his sight. Jesus declared to the woman at the well in Samaria, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers" (John 4:23). Thus the true spirit of man must be expressed in his worship, the first qualification named by our Lord. When one's worship of God degenerates into a form, his Christianity has been transformed to a mere religion, which will not only fail him in the time to come, but will cease to sustain him in the present. It

may become more meaningless and ineffective with the passing of time and eventually be discarded.

The great truth that our God is a God of power gives him a place of honor with every honest man who accepts this fact as a reality. It appears to be one of the basic principles of human nature where it has not been distorted by envy or jealousy, to give honor to the one who accomplishes great things. An illustration of this is seen in our practice of hero-worship. A man who has done that which no other man has accomplished is naturally praised by his fellows. Many times his praise may be short-lived, or it may be overshadowed by the accomplishment of others. But this can never be true of the manifestation of the greatness of God. It matters not whether one gazes upon the rugged mountain peaks which tower toward heaven, or the great rolling blue of the expanse of ocean, or the starry skies of a summer's night, he is filled with reverence and awe. The more conscious he is that his God is the maker of them all, the better prepared he will be to worship him. May we always see in these things God's everlasting power and divinity, and ever be ready to praise him for his wonderful works.

The man or the woman with whom this truth has become a living reality is not only prepared in heart to worship God, but has learned to think of worship as a privilege and not as an obligation. The greater the being to whom we do honor, the greater the honor we do ourselves. Furthermore, the person who fully appreciates the greatness of our God should never be ashamed to worship him. Also the thought of God's greatness should bring

us to realize our littleness and our dependency and thus clothe us with humility in preparation for that service through which God will exalt us.

If the greatness of God's power is a living thought with us, it is a strong support to our hope through Christ and, "seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (II Pet. 1:3) we should be encouraged to give diligence to acquire the Christian graces. And with confidence we should be able to join Paul in saying, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen" (Eph. 3:20-21). Also knowing the greatness of God's power, we would "be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28).

Not only would the thought sustain us in our efforts to serve God and even to suffer for his name's sake but it would help to keep us from errors that might turn us from the way. Jesus declared to the Sadducees, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God" (Matt. 22:29). The Sadducees had refused the teaching on the resurrection and had indicated in their question about whose wife the woman who had had seven husbands would be in the resurrection that they had confused their own thinking because they had underestimated the power of God. Surely he that can call man forth from the grave has the power and has provided for all such eventualities.

We have people today who have become confused and have faltered because of similar rationalizations about the conditions and relationships in heaven. All such unanswered questions as: Will we know each other there? and how can a person be happy in heaven knowing that many of those whom he loved while on the earth are being tormented in hell? are evidence of the same failure to recognize God's power as that of the Sadducees.

Also there are those who justify certain practices in which they should not engage on the rationalization that there is no other way for the thing God wants accomplished to be accomplished. They seem to have forgotten the rationalization of Sarai that led her to give Abram Hagar to wife. Rather we should believe in the power of God as did Abraham. "By faith Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac: yea, he that had gladly received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; even he to whom it was said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God is able to raise up, even from the dead; from whence he did also in a figure receive him back" (Heb. 11:17-19). Even though what he had been told to do appeared to be diametrically opposed to God's plan he trusted in God's power and carefully followed God's instruction. May we learn not to be turned aside from the right by our own wisdom but to put our trust in the power of God and say on all occasions as Joshua did, "As for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah" (Josh. 24:15).

QUESTIONS ON LESSON 2

1. As we continue, what two important facts already discussed should be kept in mind?
2. What is imperative if we are to understand God's plan and apply it personally?
3. Why is it not enough to accept the facts about God theoretically?
4. What is not, and what is the purpose of this discussion?
5. To what are we pointed as evidence of God's power?
6. What issue do such statements make unmistakable?
7. Under similar questioning, what must be the final answer of the materialist and also the Bible believer?
8. Show that it is no reflection upon one's education or intelligence to accept the Bible teaching.
9. Point out the fallacy in one's claiming that science has shown that there is no God or man has no soul.
10. What only can such reasoning accomplish?
11. When does man's intelligence become exceedingly dangerous?
12. Tell the story that illustrates what the man is doing who claims to know all the answers.
13. What is a second great evidence of God's power?
14. Of what is the recognition of God's power the chief cornerstone?
15. What can change man's praise from a thing of joy to a thing of disgust?
16. What has happened to one's Christianity when his worship has degenerated into a form?
17. To what principle of human nature does the greatness of God's power appeal?
18. How does one who recognizes God's greatness think of worship and what important influence will this have upon him?
19. What other influences should we receive from the assurance of God's greatness?
20. What was responsible for the Sadducees' error about the resurrection?
21. By what rationalization do some people justify their practices?
22. What Old Testament character made the same mistake?
23. What Old Testament character obeyed God when human rationalization would have been to the contrary?

LESSON 3

A GOD OF KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM

The God of the Bible is not only described as a God of power, but also a God of knowledge and of wisdom. He is not only “able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Eph. 3:20), but he knows all things about all things. “Because if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things” (I John 3:20). “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out!” (Rom. 11:33). “To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever” (Rom. 16:27). Other statements give emphasis to this same truth, but these are sufficient to remind those who accept the Bible teaching that our God is a God who knows, a God whose judgment should be unquestioned.

The writer is aware of the fact that the words knowledge and wisdom are not synonyms; knowledge is “acquaintance with fact; hence scope of information” (Webster) and wisdom is “ability to judge soundly and deal sagaciously with facts” (Webster). Nevertheless, knowledge and wisdom supplement and complete each other in such a way that the two together qualify the possessor to speak with authority. For this reason, we are thinking of the two jointly to stress the simple fact that the God of the

Bible was abundantly qualified to provide a plan for the salvation of man the adaptability and effectiveness of which should never be called in question.

That our God is a God of knowledge and wisdom is a very simple fact. It is one that is readily accepted by religious people almost without consideration. I fear, however, that with too many people its acceptance has been theoretical and the impact of its greatness has not been experienced. Man's proneness to associate that which is simple, plain or easily understood or that which is common or abundant with low evaluation or lack of importance may be, in part, responsible for his failure to give this fact about our God its true appraisal. It has apparently been given a somewhat nominal place in a system of religion. The actual sense of its reality together with the influence of its potency in the lives of men has been greatly obscured by the misplacement of emphasis through human short-sightedness. We have failed to recognize that the real foundation of consistent human behavior is to be found in the true evaluation of basic facts with the resulting convictions and attitudes. This constitutes the inner control of the individual and without it he is like a ship without a rudder whose going and coming is determined by the various winds that blow; he is controlled largely by his environmental influences. We have been more concerned with the individual precepts that are provided in God's word as directors of the behavior of those who have accepted the basic facts and established the motivating convictions of Christianity through a real faith in God, and have neglected these real controls of

Christian character that prepare the individual to follow the detailed instruction on what to do and how to do it. We seem to have assumed that people believe these facts so our remaining task is to persuade them to act, not seeming to understand that when such facts are given reality they provide their own motivation. Facts that are vital to human welfare when accepted as reality demand human behavior that is consistent with them. Then let us test our faith in the teaching that our God is a God of knowledge and wisdom by the consistency of our actions. Do our actions show that we believe this? Do we treat God's teaching in a way that indicates that we believe he is a God of knowledge and wisdom?

In the first place, everyone who accepts this truth recognizes the word of God as the infallible source of information on all questions regarding man's duties and relationships both to God and to his fellows. It is the final authority. It is the highest, the best and the only correct teaching that man can find relative to his own personal development and also gives the highest and best principles to guide him in dealing with the people with whom he associates. In all the relationships of life, God's teaching gives one the basic principles for being the most efficient individual, for being the best son or daughter, the best father or mother, the most successful person in business, the best teacher or the best student, the best employer or the best employee. Why should we not expect this to be true? Why should not the Creator and Maker of the human being, the world in which he lives, and the society in which he moves know the best

principles for his development and guidance in all of his relationships of life? The greatest difficulty with people today, the cause of the most of our failures in all of the work that we attempt, lies in the fact that we have turned away from divine wisdom and sought our guidance in the puny storehouse of man's knowledge and wisdom.

We might do well at this point to recall what God said to the people of Israel, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:8-9). Although this was said in the days of Israel, it is still appropriate today; human thoughts and ways are still far below God's. David, the man after God's own heart declared, "O Jehovah, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising; Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou searchest out my path and my lying down, And art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, But, lo, O Jehovah, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, And laid thy hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me" (Ps. 139:1-6). Paul reminded us of God's pre-eminence saying, "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out!" (Rom. 11:33). These statements assure us that our God is a God of wisdom; a wisdom that is far beyond the comprehension of man.

What should this mean to me, as well as to every

other man who accepts it as a reality? It should certainly give God a more exalted position with me, and provide me with a genuine confidence in the plan which he has prepared for my salvation. There should be no doubt that he knows what is best for me to do and also what is the best way to do it. This being true, I should never forsake his way for mine. To do so, even though I may be blind enough to believe that my way is just as good, is to cast reflection upon the wisdom of my God, and is certainly an act of disrespect, if nothing more. Hence, I should be careful not to exalt myself and humiliate God, but should humble myself and honor him by being scrupulously careful to do just what his wisdom directs, and just as near the way that he would have me do it as my human imperfections will allow.

Should someone say to me, "I know that the Bible teaches a certain thing but this is just as good," what is he trying to tell me? He may not intend it that way, but he is saying that what my God has said about the matter is no better than what man says. Has God given us a teaching on any matter and then said, "Now if it does not please you to do this, do what you want to do and that will be just as good." If such is correct would not an all-wise God have known it and would he not have told us? And since he has not, how are we to know? And why was Jesus so careful to teach just what God taught him (John 8:28) if it is just as good for man to teach something else?

The statements on God's knowledge and wisdom quoted above show unmistakably that our God was abundantly

qualified through his understanding of man and all of his ways as well as all of his surroundings and all of his needs to provide for him a plan of salvation that is fully adapted to the demands of his conditions and unquestionably effective in its operation. Certainly this should inspire us with confidence to learn, to respect, and to diligently apply its teachings in our lives day by day. We should not only be influenced by the fact that our God was fully qualified to direct the ways of man because he was acquainted with man's nature and needs but also by the fact that his knowledge of man is both personal and perpetual. He is a God that sees man in all of his goings and is acquainted with all of his ways. The Bible declares this truth repeatedly and since a consciousness of it is of inestimable value to us we shall take the time to examine a few of the statements.

Though not the first evidence of the fact, the first statement of the fact was made through Hagar, the handmaid of Sarai. When Sarai knew that the seed promised Abram was to come forth out of his own bowels and was fully convinced that she would have no child, she gave Abram Hagar to wife. When Hagar had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes and Sarai dealt hardly with her and she fled from her face (Gen. 16:6). "And the angel of Jehovah found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur" (Gen. 16:7). The angel told her that Jehovah had heard her afflictions, that the child should be called Ishmael, and that her seed should become a great multitude. When the angel had finished the message, "And she called

the name of Jehovah that spake unto her, Thou art a God that seeth" (Gen. 16:13).

Years later after Jacob had deceived his father, Isaac, and received his blessing, Esau hated Jacob and planned to kill him. So Rebekah, his mother, conceived the plan and with the help of his father sent Jacob away to visit her people in Haran until Esau's anger turned away from him. So Jacob left Beersheba and journeyed on his way to Haran. Weary with the day's journey, when the sun was set, he took a stone and put it under his head and lay down to sleep. As he slept, he dreamed and in his dream he beheld a ladder that reached from earth to heaven and the angels of God were ascending and descending upon it, and God stood above it. And here God made known to him that it was through his lineage that the promise made to Abraham and to Isaac would be fulfilled. "And in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 28:14). He further assured Jacob that he would be with him, that he would bless him and that he would bring him again unto his own land and would not leave him until this promise had been fulfilled. "And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely Jehovah is in this place; and I knew it not" (Gen. 28:16).

When Jacob arose the next morning early he set up a stone and poured oil upon it and called the name of the place "Bethel" which means "The house of God." When Jacob came to this place the evening before evidently there was nothing unusual in its appearance. There was nothing unusual in the trees, the soil, or the rocks, the wild life,

or even in the sunset. Everything was commonplace. It was just the close of another day. It was just the time to rest from his day's journey. It seems that he thought that he was fully alone and was completely unconscious that anyone except himself knew the exact spot where he was lying down to spend the night, but after the experience of the night he awoke in the morning to declare, "Surely Jehovah is in this place; and I knew it not."

Several centuries later the psalmist expressed more fully the same idea. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, And thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall overwhelm me, And the light about me shall be night; Even the darkness hideth not from thee, But the night shineth as the day: The darkness and the light are both alike to thee" (Ps. 139:7-12). And still centuries later Jesus said, "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? and not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father: but the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matt. 10:29-30). He also instructed his disciples, "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee" (Matt. 6:6).

These statement from widely scattered periods of man's

history bear testimony to the omnipresence of Jehovah. This has been true of him through the ages and it is just as true today as it has been at any other time. As Hagar declared, "Thou art a God that seeth" she was describing an unchanging characteristic. How many of us today, as Jacob did, forget about the ever-presence of Jehovah? Probably there are more people who associate his presence with the place of worship, but there are some that are evidently not aware of his presence even there. As we go about our duties in the shop, in the office, in the classroom, in the kitchen, in the field; as we associate with each other in the home, at the picnic, on the street, or at the church, the things about us all appear to be very natural and commonplace as we see them repeatedly. There is little that speaks out to us today, "You are walking in the presence of your God." So we even forget the ever-presence of Jehovah. The psalmist expands the thought of this to impress us with the fact that we cannot run away from our God. Go where we may, on earth, in heaven or in Sheol and his presence is there. Neither can we hide from him under the canopy of night for the darkness and the light are alike unto him. In his statement Jesus assures us of God's watchful care by reasoning from the fact that he even watches the sparrows and his instruction to pray in secret to be seen of the Father in secret and be rewarded suggest the absolute necessity of every detailed application of the principle that our God seeth us. Unless it were true, what meaning would there be in prayer or in worship and what advantage in a life of righteousness?

We must pursue this matter a little further in our study if we are to complete the picture. For our God not only sees what we do and hears what we say, but he knows what we think. "And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind; for Jehovah searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts. If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever" (I Chron. 28:9). "But Jehovah said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have rejected him: for Jehovah seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looketh on the heart" (I Sam. 16:7). For our God sees not only what man sees but also looks into the very heart of man and completes his picture either for better or for worse. If these things are true there is no doubt that our God is a silent witness to every detail of our existence, to every act of our being whether objective or subjective. What should this mean to you? And what should this mean to me? What is the import of this to each of us if we accept the Bible teaching with any sense of conviction.

How would it influence my life if I had as a constant companion one whom I love with all my heart; to whom I had pledged the fullest loyalty of my being and whose approval I wanted more than that of all others; one who

loves me with a love beyond measure, yes, even before I had loved him; one who had done great things for me and promised me things that were even greater; one who smiled with favor upon my success and was grieved deeply at my failure; one who was pure and good and would guide me in the paths of truth? Should such a one stand by me as I behold the lives of them that know not God, some engaging in vice and wickedness, some giving themselves to worldly pleasure and fleshly enjoyment, others seeking the glory of men and blinded by human wisdom, either antagonistic toward or indifferent to the revealed will of God, and still others engrossed in the common affairs of this life and wholly ignorant and neglectful of the needs of his own soul, and whispered to me, "I love these people and their failures hurt me deeply. Their rescue would bring me joy and bring my praise to those who do it." What would I do? Should such a one be near me while I reviewed the religious world of today with the hundreds of separate church groups with their respective dogma, the wide variety of individual differences and contentions within the respective groups; the failure of a large percentage of individuals in every church group to make an honest effort to live the basic principles of Christianity; the widespread ignorance of the word of God and the prevalent indifference to Bible study and he would whisper to me, "I love those people and would that they would come to the knowledge of the truth, and love the truth, and practice the truth and be knit together in one soul and one mind." Recognizing that

I am one of them, what would I do? Should such a one be with me when I meet that brother to whom the fortunes of life have not provided that which satisfies his needs and whisper to me, "I love that person and those who love me will love him and show their compassions by sharing with him the good things of life." Should such a one stand by me when I receive news that some brother is overtaken in a fault and has gone aside from that which is good and right, and he should whisper to me, "I love that man and surely those who love me will restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness," what would I do?

If I love God, if I love his truth, if I have learned his teaching as one who loves him will, there is such a one that is ever near me; one who continuously reminds me of the fact that God loves these people and those who love God will try to do them good. So in the face of the conditions that exist and the problems that arise, what am I doing and what are you doing to show your love for God? Are we listening to the still small voice which speaks to us through our knowledge of his teaching and do we remember that he stands as a silent witness not only of the things wherein we fail to do what we should but also when we engage in such behavior as we should not? This thought should stand as a perpetual warning. Not that our God will know somewhere, sometime, but that he knows here and now.

Not only should the consciousness of God's presence encourage us to do that which is good and warn us to refrain from that which is evil, but it should be a con-

solation to us when we have done the best we can. He knows our capabilities and also our limitations. He knows our successes and failures. He knows what we can do and what we are trying to do. We may be misunderstood and misjudged by our neighbors who hastily judge by what they see or what they think they see. We may be accused of things which we never did or of thoughts which we never had. Our motives may be impugned. We may be blamed for not doing more or for not doing better. Regardless of how much we may be misjudged by our neighbors, this teaching assures us that our God knows and that his judgment will be not only just but merciful.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON 3

1. Give some expressions from the Bible that indicate that our God is a God of knowledge and wisdom.
2. Distinguish between knowledge and wisdom and give the reason for discussing them jointly.
3. Why has this fact probably failed to have the influence with men that it should?
4. In what is the real foundation of consistent human behavior to be found?
5. Under what condition is one controlled largely by environmental influences?
6. About what have we been especially concerned and what have we neglected relative to Christian behavior?
7. What have we assumed about people and what task then remains to us?
8. On what two conditions do facts demand that human behavior be consistent with them?
9. What may be considered a test of our faith in the fact that our God is a God of knowledge and wisdom?

10. What will those who accept this truth in reality recognize the word of God as being?
11. Why is it important that we recognize this to be true?
12. What is the cause of the most of man's religious failures today?
13. Give God's comparison of his thoughts with man's thoughts, and his ways with man's ways.
14. What did David say about God's knowledge?
15. What effect should it have upon me to know that my God is a God of wisdom?
16. How do men cast a reflection upon the wisdom of God?
17. What is the true way to honor God?
18. What is one trying to tell me who says, "This is not what God has said but this is just as good"?
19. Besides knowing man's nature and needs what else about God's knowledge of man should influence us to follow his teaching?
20. Who first declared that Jehovah was a God that seeth and what was the occasion?
21. Who said, "Surely Jehovah is in this place and I knew it not," and why did he say it?
22. What was David's testimony to the ever-presence of Jehovah?
23. How did Jesus bear witness of his watchcare?
24. Summarize the practical points that should be gleaned from the statements that indicate God's presence.
25. Name some practices that must assume that God sees in order to be meaningful.
26. Give evidences that God sees that which goes on in our heart.
27. Describe some life situations in which the thought that our God is a God that sees should be of great benefit to us.
28. Besides encouraging us to do right and warning us against doing wrong what other advantage should the knowledge of this fact bring to us?

LESSON 4

A GOD OF LOVE

The God of the Bible is not only represented to us as a God of power, and a God of knowledge and wisdom but also as a God of love. “And we know and have believed the love which God hath in us. God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him” (I John 4:16). “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love” (I John 4:7-8). Here we are told that God is love. Not that he knows something about love, or that he has an attitude of love, but God is love. While we dwell in the flesh, we may never get the full import of this simple statement because of our incomplete or defective conception of God, or because of the limitations set by our human understanding. Love is not merely an element in God’s nature, but it is God’s nature. Not only is this true but he manifested himself unto us in his Son. “Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (I John 4:9-10). “Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us” (I John 3:16).

Not only do we know the love of God through his Son but also that love was the motive force that sent Christ into the world. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Thus it is evident that Jesus did not come into the world to save man because of man's greatness nor because of his worthiness but because of God's love. Neither did he bring to man the opportunity of life because of man's goodness or righteousness or purity of life for man was living in sin and wickedness. Nor did he come to rescue man from destruction because he was a friend of God, because of man's love for God, nor because of man's faith in God, for man was estranged from God, he was alienated, he was an enemy of God. No, it was not man's merit but God's love. This is one of the greatest truths revealed in all of God's teaching. If we can but bring ourselves to accept it as a reality, it will have a most powerful influence upon our lives. Can we grasp the greatness of it all? Can we conceive of a love that reaches down to us from the Almighty? Paul makes reference to it in these words, "But God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us" (Eph. 2:4).

In Paul's letter to the Roman people, he gives further emphasis to the greatness of God's love, "For while we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: for peradventure for the good man some one will even dare to die. But God commendeth his own love toward us,

in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:6-8). Here Paul shows by contrast how far God's love transcends man's love. Here, first Paul makes a comparison between man's attitudes toward two different types of men, the righteous man and the good man, giving the good man a more favorable place. This usage of terms is quite contrary to that made by many people. This should remind us of the fact that words are not always used in the same way, and should warn us that our understanding is dependent upon the meanings assigned to the words used. Not the meanings that we have assigned, but those that are given by the writer or speaker. May I illustrate the matter by a personal experience. When I was in grade school we read and talked about the bluff city of Memphis. I had attached a very definite meaning to the word bluff, and naturally applied it in formulating my idea of the bluff city. On one side of Stone's River, which ran through my father's farm, there was an overhanging limestone rock. It arose to the height of some 20 to 30 feet, and extended along the river bank some 200 yards. It was commonly spoken of as the bluff. Thus the meaning which I had firmly attached to that word was an overhanging formation of solid rock. When it was my privilege to visit Memphis, some years later, I was quite disappointed and completely disillusioned when I stood on the bluff at Memphis and found it to be nothing more than a mud bank. The usage that many people have made of the words righteous and good has been such as to place the idea conveyed in the word righteous above that assigned to the

word good. The meanings which we have assigned have resulted from a narrow but rather common usage of the term. The question has been asked many times, "Can a good man be saved?" The idea being, will his own goodness according to man's standard, save him apart from God's righteousness. Paul is using both words with reference to man's dealings with man. To read our meanings into Paul's words obscures his meanings, but to accept them as he has used them will give us a clear conception and a marked contrast between man's love and God's love. Righteous, as it is used here, means just, fair. Thus a righteous man is one who deals honestly and uprightly with his fellows, one who gives honest weight, one who meets his honest obligations, one who pays what is earned. The good man, however, goes beyond. He is not only just, fair, upright, and honest, but is merciful and long-suffering, is sympathetic and charitable. What he will do for you is measured by your need, and not by your merit. In speaking of the practices among men, Paul is saying scarcely would one die for the man who is just and upright only, peradventure, one would dare to die for the man who has been sympathetic, long-suffering, has given him the things that he did not deserve, has won a place in his heart by his goodness. But in contrast to this, while we were not even righteous, but sinners. Christ died for us.

John would give us a measure of the greatness of God's love for us by reminding us of the greatness of the privilege which it has afforded, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be

called children of God; and such we are" (I John 3:1). What a change—from bondservants of sin, to children of the Almighty King. What a challenge this should offer to everyone who believes God's word. We are children of the King. Do we live in keeping with our station? Do we behave like children of God? Do we live in a way to honor God? Do we associate with each other as children of a God of love? Is our conversation always in keeping with our station? There is no thought which should have a more vital hold upon one who calls himself a Christian than this one. God is love and he sent Jesus as his messenger of love to make known his love unto man and offer him the privilege of eternal life. If we should reverence God because of his greatness, seek him because of his knowledge, trust him because of his wisdom, how much more should we serve him because of his love.

The fact that our God is a God of love, that his very nature is love, must not be misunderstood. It certainly should give no one the idea that because of this, God has bestowed upon man all of the blessings of this life and eventually will give him the glories of the next regardless of man's attitude and behaviour toward God. Lest one who desires to follow his own way deceive himself with such thinking, we should call to mind in this connection another fact about our God. He is a jealous God. "Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them; for I Jehovah thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate me,

and showing lovingkindness unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments” (Ex. 20:5-6). “But ye shall break down their altars, and dash in pieces their pillars, and ye shall cut down their Asherim (for thou shalt worship no other god: for Jehovah, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God)” (Ex. 34:13-14). “Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of Jehovah your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image in the form of anything which Jehovah thy God hath forbidden thee. For Jehovah thy God is a devouring fire, a jealous God” (Deut. 4:23-24). “Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them; for I, Jehovah thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate me” (Deut. 5:9). “Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the peoples that are round about you; for Jehovah thy God in the midst of thee is a jealous God; lest the anger of Jehovah thy God be kindled against thee, and he destroy thee from off the face of the earth” (Deut. 6:14-15). “And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve Jehovah; for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgression nor your sins” (Josh. 24:19). “Jehovah is a jealous God and avengeth; Jehovah avengeth and is full of wrath; Jehovah taketh vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies” (Nah. 1:2). It may be noted that all of these statements are taken from the record of that period when Israel was under the law, but what was true of Jehovah during that period

was also true before that time and ever thereafter, for God himself declared, "For I, Jehovah, change not" (Mal. 3:6).

Furthermore, an examination of the record of God's dealings with man manifests this characteristic from the beginning. Our God is a jealous God. This simply means that if we are to enjoy the ultimate blessings of God's love we must love him in return. We must put him first in our affection. His every wish must be respected. We must find joy in doing the things that he wants us to do, and doing them as he wants them done. This simply means that his teaching must come first as Jesus declared to his disciples. "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15:10). This is one of the most important lessons for us to learn. If we would abide in God's love and in the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, we must keep his commandments and certainly in order to do this we must learn what they are. We must diligently study his teaching. This is very important to us as we begin the study of God's plan because it shows the importance of studying it and suggests the earnestness and zeal with which we should study. There is but one way that we can put God first, and that is by putting his teaching first.

In order that we may more fully understand the importance of implicit obedience, we will review some of God's dealings with man, to observe how the blessings of God's love were lost by man's failure to fully respect his teaching.

When God had made man we are told that, "Jehovah God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And Jehovah God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:15-17). Here we learn that God gave man a two-fold instruction. He was to dress and keep the garden and he was not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. So far as our record indicates man complied with the first instruction fully. There is no implication that he failed in the work that he was told to do, but he failed to respect God in regard to that which he was told not to do. When the serpent came to Eve in the garden of Eden and asked her of God's instructions concerning her eating of the trees of the garden, she stated God's teaching on the matter, but knowing what God said was not enough. Her love for him did not lead her to respect his wish in the matter. She was open to consider some way other than God's way, someone else's wish other than God's wish, and apparently was led to believe that God's statement was false. She probably would not have said so, but by failing to respect him fully she allowed her desires to lead her to ignore God's teaching and follow her own way in the matter. This was her fatal mistake and one that is still being made by many among her posterity. She proposed to weigh the facts for herself. She did. She arrived at her own decision, one that dishonored and dethroned God. The facts

given her in regard to the fruit were absolutely correct. It was good for food; it was a delight to the eyes, and it would make her wise to know good and evil. As she thought of these things and was reminded that God knew that it would cause her to know good and evil, and surely she would not die for doing a thing like that, she seems to have come to the conclusion that her Creator and Maker would not do what he said he would. So she disrespected his teaching. She dethroned her God and enthroned her reasoning. A thing that man has been doing from that day until this. And how frequently do we hear people today justify some practice in rejecting some portion of God's word after the same fashion. How often do people reason today that this is just a little thing, or surely, God will pass over this admitting that they are not following the will of God in its strictest interpretation. Probably Eve thought the same thing, but what a mistake!

Have we ever fully considered what Eve really did in the light of human reasoning. She did not repudiate God. She did not deny that he was God. She did not refuse to worship him as God. She did not blaspheme his name. She did not become a moral degenerate. What did she do? She took a piece of fruit and ate it. She did not steal from a neighbor. She did not shed the blood of her fellowman. She did not bear false witness. She did not lie. She merely took a piece of fruit and ate it and gave to her husband with her and he ate it. Can we think of an act that is less offensive? Can we think of an act that would appear to be less degrading?

Then why was this such a terrible thing to do? Do we ever hear such a question asked today? The magnitude of this wrong cannot be measured by the human evaluation of the act itself, for man measures the wickedness of an act by its effect upon the one who is injured by it. By this standard of measure man thinks of murder as being terrible, but lying is only a minor offense. Fifty years ago adultery or fornication was considered terrible, but in this day of contraceptive devices it seems that many adjudge it only a personal privilege. This last statement should indicate that such a method of judging wrong is a changing variable and can never be a proper standard of measure. We should not overlook the fact that the sinfulness of an act is not measured in terms of its injustice to man, but by the doer's attitude toward God. Measured by the former standard the sin of Eve would have been no sin, but when measured by the latter standard the breach in her love for God is evident. Thus man's behavior can only be measured correctly when measured in terms of the will of his Maker. So in doing this, Eve had sinned against God.

In our foregoing discussion it has been assumed that Eve committed her sin deliberately and fully conscious that she was doing what God had told her not to do. This may be correct, it may not. This is not a matter of Bible statement. We do know that when the serpent asked about God's teaching relative to eating the fruit that the woman answered, "Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye

shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die" (Gen. 3:2-3). We do not know how much time passed between this time and when the act was committed. Neither do we know how effectively the increasing strength of Eve's desire weakened her consciousness of God's teaching. It may have been that her attention had become so completely absorbed in her desires for what the fruit offered that momentarily she forgot God and his teaching. Whether this is correct or not, it appears to be what frequently happens in the lives of men today. Giving consideration to any profits, or allowing our thinking to dwell upon any pleasures that might be had by indulging in any practice which God forbids is a very dangerous thing to do. Whether Eve disobeyed God consciously or did so under the blinding influence of her own personal desire, it was due to her failure to respect God as she ought and caused her to be driven out from his presence that very day.

Now since God drove man out from his presence because man dishonored his word, why should we expect God to take us back until we have enthroned him in our heart completely, until we are willing to follow his word implicitly, until we are willing to honor him in humility by seeking to know what he would have us to do and exercising the greatest care to do it the best that we can. In what other way can we show our love for God? We should not forget he only asked to be our God. Someone might ask, "Is he not God?" "Do not people call him God?" He is not our God until we treat him

as God, not merely call him God. He is our God only when we enthrone him in our life to rule over it.

When the people of Israel had been led out of the land of Egypt, had been given the law in Mount Sinai and the tabernacle had been set up according to God's instruction, we are told, "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took each of them his censer, and put fire therein, and laid incense thereon, and offered strange fire before Jehovah, which he had not commanded them. And there came forth fire from before Jehovah, and devoured them, and they died before Jehovah. Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that Jehovah spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace" (Lev. 10:1-3). In this simple story we see the right men, Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron and priests of God, duly anointed and prepared for their service, at the right place, the altar of incense before the sanctuary, with incense in their censers, that which they were taught to use, but for some unexplained reason they did not have the right kind of fire. Consequently, God destroyed them because he had not been sanctified or honored in them, because they had not implicitly followed his teaching. Our God is a jealous God.

But someone may object, "This is Old Testament teaching. We are living under the teachings through Christ." This is a true statement. At least, the facts stated are correct, but the implication is false. This principle has not changed. The only way that man can honor God today is through implicit obedience to his

will. The teaching which God has given us through the Lord Jesus Christ must be respected as fully and as carefully as the teaching which God gave to Adam in person, or that which he gave to the people of Israel through Moses.

Jesus made this plain at the time of his temptation. In the very first recorded statement made after the time of his baptism he taught this very lesson. When Satan challenged his sonship by asking that he change the stones to bread, our Saviour answered with a teaching that had been given before this time but was still to be respected. "But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). Moses had given this teaching in the long ago (Deut. 8:3). It is just as true today. Man shall live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. This Adam and Eve failed to do, so they were cut off from the tree of life and they ceased to live. And so will it be with us. If we refuse to honor completely and fully all of God's teaching that he has revealed to us through the Lord Jesus Christ, which teaching includes all of the basic lessons of the Bible as a whole, we should not expect to return to that close relationship with God that man had in the beginning. Since God drove man out from that close association because he refused to respect his word, why should we think that he will receive man back into that close relationship to dwell for eternity when man has not learned to respect his word? This does not necessarily imply that God expects of man perfection,

that he expects man to make no mistake, but he does expect man to enthrone him as God, and impelled by the love shown through the Lord Jesus Christ, to live "unto him who for their sakes died and rose again." Our God is a jealous God.

It was in the last days of the life of Moses when he gathered the people in the land of Moab and gave to them his final message that he reminded them that God had humbled them and suffered them to hunger and fed them with manna, "that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by everything that proceedeth out of the mouth of Jehovah doth man live" (Deut. 8:3). On that same occasion he solemnly charged them, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it, that ye may keep the commandments of Jehovah your God which I command you" (Deut. 4:2). With what a bitter experience Moses had learned the weight of these words. It was in the wilderness of Zin at the water of Meribah where the people strove with Moses because they had no water. "And Jehovah spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and assemble the congregation, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes, that it give forth its water; and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock; so thou shalt give the congregation and their cattle drink. And Moses took the rod from before Jehovah, as he commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; shall we bring you forth water out of this rock? And

Moses lifted up his hand, and smote the rock with his rod twice: and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their cattle. And Jehovah said unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed not in me, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them" (Num. 20:7-12).

Through Samuel, God declared unto Saul that the Amalekites should be utterly destroyed because they had fought against Israel while the people were on their way from Egypt to the land of Canaan. So he said to Saul, "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass" (I Sam. 15:3). We are told that Saul gathered an army of two hundred and ten thousand men and warned the Kenites to separate themselves from the Amalekites. He slew the Amalekites, man woman and child, with the exception of one man, king Agag. He destroyed all of the sheep and oxen, the fatlings and the lambs, with the exception of a few. He brought them and king Agag back home with him. When he met Samuel, Saul said, "I have performed the commandment of Jehovah. And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" (I Sam. 15:13-14).

Were we to measure what Saul did by the human measure that we sometimes want to apply to matters of Christianity, we would probably conclude that king Saul did extra well. He gathered a large army, separated the

people, destroyed all but one, and all but a very few cattle. In fact, for all "practical purposes" as Saul expressed it, he "performed the commandments of God." Yet Samuel said, "Because thou hast rejected the word of Jehovah, he hath also rejected thee from being king" (I Sam. 15: 23). Had it been something that Saul could not do, it would have been different. But it was something that Saul could do but would not. This is the sort of thing that shows without question that one has dethroned God.

Here we are reminded of the graphic manner in which Jesus expressed the same lesson. "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). Lord means ruler. To call him Lord and not submit to his teaching was a case of their actions belying their words, the gravest sort of inconsistency.

As our last case in point, we turn to the history of Jeroboam. He had led the people away from the worship of God in Jerusalem and built altars at Dan and Bethel. He was worshiping at the altar at Bethel when a man of God out of Judah came to cry against the altar. God had told this man from Judah to go to Bethel and cry against this altar, not to eat anything while he was in that country, and to return by another way. The man of Judah was courageous. He did not fear to face king Jeroboam. He fully delivered his message against the altar. When Jeroboam made an effort to lay hold upon him, Jeroboam's hand dried up. Also, the altar was rent and the ashes poured out, which was the sign that God had given to the man of God. Jeroboam entreated him to ask the favor of Jehovah and restore his hand. The man of God from Judah

did so, showing that the power of God was with him. Jeroboam invited the man to go home with him to refresh himself and receive a reward, but received the answer that he would not even for half of Jeroboam's house, and explained that God had told him not to eat in that country. The man of God from Judah started on his return journey according to his instructions, by another way. But when an old prophet who lived in that country heard of the matter, he pursued the man of God and overtook him. He found him sitting under an oak. He invited the man of God to go home with him to dinner, but was refused and was given the reason why. But the old prophet said, "I also am a prophet as thou art; and an angel spake unto me by the word of Jehovah, saying, Bring him back with thee into thy house, that he may eat bread and drink water. But he lied unto him" (I Kings 13:18). So the man of God went back with the old prophet. While they sat at the table, the word of God did come to the old prophet and the message was to the man of God from Judah, "Forasmuch as thou hast been disobedient unto the mouth of Jehovah, and hast not kept the commandment which Jehovah thy God commanded thee, but camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place of which he said to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water, thy body shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers" (I Kings 13:21-22). As the man of God from Judah started on the way home a lion met him by the way and slew him. And when the old prophet came to the place where he lay, he mourned over him saying, "Alas, my brother!" (I Kings 13:30).

Why did the man of God from Judah meet such a fate? Was it because he was unwilling to do what God told him to do? Certainly not. Was it because he was afraid to go to the place where God wanted him to go? Not at all. Was it because he feared to pronounce the curse upon the altar in the presence of Jeroboam? Emphatically, no. Was it because he had forgotten part of what Jehovah had told him to do? Not in the least. It was because he was willing to listen to man instead of following God's word implicitly. He listened to a man who came to him as a prophet of God, who evidently was well respected in the community and who claimed that God had spoken unto him. But all of this did not excuse the man of God. Neither will God excuse us today when we allow ourselves to be led away from the truth by men, even though they are men who are held in high esteem, who are spoken of as religious men, even by some as godly men.

Why do we allow men to stand between us and our God? Why do we allow men to turn us away from the true teaching of God? Why did God reveal himself unto man through the labors and sufferings of so many people including those of his only begotten Son? And why, through his divine providence, by the power of the Holy Spirit, has he provided us with detailed records and instructions if they are not necessary to our welfare? Why did a loving God ruthlessly drive man out from him into a world that was cursed for his sake and leave record of the same if he did not do it to teach man the need of implicit obedience? Why did he lead Moses upon Nebo's lonely mountain side in the solemn solitude of nature, from Pisgah's

height, show him the land into which he was not permitted to enter, close his eyes in the sleep of death and bury him in a valley in the land of Moab? Why was this Moses whose eye was undimmed and whose natural force was not abated, who had patiently toiled and struggled with a rebellious people for forty years, who had faithfully followed God's instructions with only one exception, not permitted to enter into that land that flowed with milk and honey? Why did the God of wisdom do this thing, and why did he record it for our learning if he did not do it to teach men to respect every word that cometh from the mouth of God? Why did God record for us the story of the man of God from Judah who faithfully cried out against the altar at Bethel, who faithfully refused to dine with Jeroboam, who faithfully started on his return journey by a different route and only failed when he was led astray by the one who called himself "the prophet of God," for which he failed to return to his home and to his people, if he did not record it to warn us against the danger of being misled by men and to impress us with the fact that our God is a jealous God? He has loved us supremely and expects those who would share his glory to love him with a love that puts him first by keeping his commandments sincerely.

Do we believe that the God whom we serve is a jealous God? If so, then we know that he is not going to be pleased with a half-hearted, careless sort of service. If we know that God will not be pleased with a half-hearted, careless sort of service, surely we cannot be content to continue in indifference and ineffectiveness and still hope to inherit

that which God has prepared for those who love him. How can we fail to be moved by this great fact? Our God is a jealous God.

Here is the reason why every person who calls himself a Christian should study the Bible diligently, should apply the teaching in his own life carefully, yea, even meticulously, and should teach his neighbor to render implicit obedience to it. We do not honor and please God by merely practicing a form of religion dedicated to him through the name of his son but by devotedly and unreservedly doing what he has taught us to do in the way he has taught us to do it. This faithfulness to his teaching is the true measure of our love for him. There are some people who have called such faithfulness narrowness. Evidently this misinterpretation is due to a failure to fully realize that our God is a jealous God. He will accept only a love that is genuine and such a love will put God first.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON 4

1. Give evidences that our God is a God of love.
2. What did not cause God to send Jesus into the world and what did cause him to send him?
3. Give the contrast used by Paul to show how far God's love transcends man's love.
4. Illustrate how one's particular concepts may cause him to misunderstand.
5. How is Paul here using the word righteous and the word good?
6. What privilege of man does John use to suggest the greatness of God's love?
7. What challenge should this privilege bring to us?
8. What false idea should one not get from the fact that God is a God of love?

9. Give evidences that our God is a jealous God.
10. From what period of Bible history are these statements taken?
11. Quote a statement which indicates that the God of the New Testament is a jealous God.
12. What did Jesus say that man must do to abide in God's love?
13. Why is this a very important lesson to us as we begin our study of God's plan?
14. What is the only way that we can put God first?
15. In what did man apparently honor God but in what did he dishonor him?
16. What was Eve's fatal mistake?
17. What was Eve told about the fruit that was correct?
18. What did Eve enthrone in place of God?
19. How do people often justify their doing the same sort of thing today?
20. In terms of human wisdom what did Eve do that disrespected God?
21. How is man inclined to measure the wickedness of an act?
22. What should be the measure of the wickedness of an act?
23. What is a very dangerous thing for us to do today?
24. Even from this early teaching why should we not expect God to receive us until we implicitly receive his word?
25. When is Jehovah really our God?
26. Name some cases from the Old Testament that illustrate the fact that our God is a jealous God.
27. Show from Jesus' teaching at the time of his temptation that God is a jealous God.
28. Upon what occasion did Moses learn this lesson?
29. Just what did Saul do, or fail to do, in rejecting God?
30. What warning should we take from the fate of the man of God from Judah?
31. If we truly believe that our God is a jealous God what will we do?
32. The fact that our God is a jealous God is the reason for every person who calls himself a Christian doing what?
33. What lesson has the person who interprets faithfulness to Bible teaching as narrowness failed to get?

PART II
JESUS' MISSION

Let us not forget that these lessons have but one purpose: a better understanding of God's plan as it applies to each one individually. We desire more than any other one thing to understand our Christian mission and how to fulfill it. Since we are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, it appears reasonable to think that a better understanding of his mission would not only help us to understand our mission, but also aid in grasping the correct meaning of the instruction which he has given to us. It is well in considering any teaching to study it from the point of view of the teacher, keeping in mind the purpose to be accomplished.

Jesus' mission is stated to us in several different ways. There is complete harmony or agreement in the statements, yet each expression provides a somewhat different point of view, and contributes to a better insight into its nature. Let us now give prayerful consideration to a number of these statements in the hope that it will improve our understanding of Jesus' teaching.

LESSON 5
JESUS CAME TO SAVE

Before Jesus was conceived in the womb, “The angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. And he came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou art highly favored, the Lord is with thee. But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this might be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS” (Luke 1:26-31). Jesus signifies saviour, thus he was given a name indicative of his mission. When this that Gabriel had spoken unto Mary had come to pass, and she had conceived before her marriage, Joseph, her espoused husband, very naturally came to believe that she had been unfaithful to him. “And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But when he thought on these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name

JESUS; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:19-21). And so, before his birth, his mission in life is announced to his foster father; he was to save his people from their sins.

At the time of his birth, "And there were shepherds in the same country abiding in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flock. And an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:8-11). And thus, as Jesus began his earthly existence the divine messenger proclaimed him as a Saviour. When the days of purification were fulfilled according to the law of Moses, Jesus was carried to Jerusalem, to be presented to the Lord. At this time, the aged Simeon came into the temple and bore testimony. "And it had been revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. . . . Then he received him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, Now lettest thou thy servant depart, Lord, According to thy word, in peace; For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples" (Luke 2:26, 28-31). Simeon, through the Holy Spirit, testified that the Lord's Christ was to bring salvation, that is, to be a saviour.

On different occasions during Jesus' public ministry, he emphatically declared his mission. While in the home

of Zacchaeus, after hearing the noble pledge which was made, Jesus closed his reply with the words, "For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). In talking with Nicodemus, after stating that God sent his Son into the world because he loved the world, Jesus declared, "For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him" (John 3:17). In talking with the Jews who refused him, Jesus made a similar statement, "And if any man hear my sayings, and keep them not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world" (John 12:47). Here Jesus gave emphasis to the nature of his mission by declaring that he did not come to do the opposite. He came not to judge or condemn the world, but to save the world. In fact, the world was already condemned. The sinful condition of the world is most vividly described in the New Testament. It needed no one to condemn it; it needed a Saviour, and Jesus came for that express purpose.

It was a mission of love and mercy upon which the Father had sent him as he expressed it after teaching the parable of the lost sheep. "Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish" (Matt. 18:14). Paul declared that, "Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (I Tim. 1:15). He also expressed God's attitude toward sinful men in these words, "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of

the truth" (I Tim. 2:3-4). John declared in his first epistle, "And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (I John 4:14). Peter told us, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9). Peter with the other apostles proclaimed before the council, "Him did God exalt with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins" (Acts 5:31).

These statements make it unmistakably clear to anyone who accepts the New Testament as true, that Jesus came into the world to save sinners, that this was his ultimate goal, that this was his one purpose. Should it not also be the purpose of everyone that follows him? Should not every Christian's highest interest be in living in such a way as to honor God and provide a saving influence by both life and teaching? To be sure we are human, our mistakes and weaknesses are many. We may never be able to follow the letter of his teaching, but certainly he expects us to follow the spirit of it. Certainly we should be able to follow it in purpose, and our purpose should be to glorify God in our own lives and to influence others to glorify him by accepting his Son as their Saviour. If this purpose dominated the heart and life of everyone who professes to be a Christian, the church would exert an influence which no community or people could withstand. The most serious questions which should confront every follower of the Lord Jesus Christ are: Am I representing

my Lord as a Saviour? Am I helping to present to the world his teaching in such a way that the impression will be given that he came as a Saviour, that he wants to save? Or, am I teaching it with that misplaced emphasis that will cause people to believe that Jesus came to condemn the world? We should remember that if we are representing him as other than a Saviour, we are misrepresenting him.

In the first public announcement made of Jesus' mission after his birth, the angel proclaimed to the shepherds, "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11). Here Jesus was not only proclaimed to be a Saviour, but this announcement is declared to be good tidings of great joy. We cannot truly show to the world that Jesus is a Saviour without also showing that this fact is good tidings of great joy. Do our lives show that Jesus has brought great joy? Unless he has truly brought joy to us that cannot be. We cannot show to others that which we do not have ourselves. Has he made the burdens of life easier for us, or do we still have the same anxieties and worries, the same doubtings and fears, the same disappointments and griefs with the same intensities as those who make no claims to be followers of Christ? In times of distress and grief, do we suffer the same helplessness? In times of disaster and catastrophe, do we experience the same uncertainties and confusion as those who do not know Jesus as their Saviour? When the clouds hang low over our homes, communities,

our nation or the world, is the night as dark and the promise of the coming day as uncertain as with those who know not God? If these questions must be answered "yes," how can we ever expect to show to the world that Jesus as a Saviour has meant good tidings unto us? How can we make it appear as good tidings to the world?

There is another field in which we may apply this same question: Do we show that Jesus has brought to us good tidings of great joy by the joy which we find in worship and in service to him? Does the regularity and punctuality with which we attend our place of worship, the interest and enthusiasm that we manifest in our worship, the zeal which we manifest in encouraging others to attend worship, proclaim to the world that Jesus has brought joy to us? Or, to state our question another way: Can the person who is indifferent toward the study of God's word and who never or seldom attends the Sunday Bible school, or attends without having given any attention to his lesson; who arrives at church late, and shows more interest in laughing and talking with other people than entering into the service, or learning the lesson; who is indifferent toward the song service and careless in prayer; who never prays at home or in private; who finds his church life a burden; who has little or no interest or joy in helping other people ever show to other people that there is joy in Christianity? May the time come when we can reach that place where we can put our trust in God and believe that he will bring it to pass. A faith in God's word and a sincerity in our hearts will make the joy of Christianity

a reality to us and our lives will represent Christ and not misrepresent him.

There is still another way that we show that our learning of Jesus as a saviour has been received as a message of joy. Do we find joy in telling others the story of salvation personally or helping in getting the message to others? If it has brought joy to me, I will tell others. Were I to go shopping and find a real bargain in a standard article needed in all homes, selling for only half of its value, or should I learn of some new article of great use or of a new method of great success, something that brings me joy and profit, will I not find joy in telling my friends about it? Will I not find time to tell them about it? How will people ever believe that the gospel, the good news of Jesus as a saviour, has become good tidings of great joy to me when I have no interest in telling others about it? How did the early disciples show their joy? Did they not go everywhere telling the story, and were they not able to rejoice even in their privilege of suffering for the cause of Christ? Where is that great impelling force of Christianity today?

Another expression of Jesus' mission, the direct purpose of which was to show the nature of Jesus' work, lends further emphasis to the fact that Jesus came to save and also that the real mission of every Christian is to influence men to honor and glorify God in their lives. "But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you: but whosoever would become great among you shall

be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:25-28). Jesus came to serve.

This statement of Jesus' mission presents us with a teaching that has been taken by most people entirely too lightly. It has been very poorly applied or almost overlooked in the lives of a large percentage of the people who call themselves followers of our Lord Jesus Christ. The failure to understand it and apply it personally, to recognize that it is an actual part of our answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" has been responsible, probably more than any other single thing for the fact that only a small percentage of the human family has accepted the teaching of Christ, and also for the fact that a large per cent of this small percentage is making miserable efforts to follow him whom they accepted as their Lord.

The conditions under which the statement was made indicate that Jesus' mission was to be an example for us. As he came to serve, so our real mission in life is to serve. By a reading of the preceding verses, we see that a request had been made for a high place, a place in which people are to be served, a place in keeping with the idea of human greatness. Furthermore, Jesus pointed out the fact that this was the practice among the Gentiles, but should not be the practice among his people. Then he introduced the statement that he came to minister or to serve with the words "even as" making it plain that his followers

were to be servants even as he came for the purpose of serving. Since Jesus came for the purpose of serving and has given the directions, "follow me," certainly our purpose in life should be to serve. Since Jesus is to be our example of a servant, we might look to him as the example of the type of service that we are to render, and by this means get a better conception of what we are trying to do or should be trying to do. We are willing to say that we are servants of God, but seem frequently to overlook the fact that servants must render a service. We also fail frequently to recognize what that service is.

Jesus came into the world to serve God. How did he serve? What did God want done? Man had gone the way of sin. He had followed the will of the flesh. He was defiled before his Creator. God wanted to save him. He wanted him to learn the way of life. He wanted him to rise above his life of sinfulness and selfishness. This was the one service that he wanted rendered. Man was walking in darkness, blinded by his own wisdom, so Jesus came to provide the light of life. Thus we see that Jesus served God by serving man.

But Jesus did not complete the service that God wanted rendered to man. He did that which the Father wanted him to do. He provided the way of life. He became the sacrifice for sins. He shed his light into the hearts and lives of a limited number of men, but left the great mass of humanity yet to be served. His followers should take up his service. The Christian life is a life of service. We must serve God, and we can only serve God by serving men. The service that we can render to man is the same

kind of service that Jesus rendered—to turn him away from himself and his sin, to lift him to a higher and better life, to cause him to accept Jesus' teaching and honor and glorify his Father in heaven. This is our service. It is our only real service. Whatever we can do, or whatever we can say in this life that is a service to God will be that which influences other people to understand and believe the truth, to accept Jesus Christ and be faithful to his teaching.

While Jesus was here he not only declared himself to be the light of the world, but he also said to his disciples, "Ye are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14), and further exhorted, "Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). In the same connection he stressed the same responsibility in another figure. "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men" (Matt. 5:13). He was the Saviour of the world, and is the Saviour of the world, but the grave responsibility of passing that saving power on to people from one generation to the next he left with those who have accepted his teaching. It is up to us. We cannot expect the atheist or the infidel to teach the way of life. It can only be done by those who have received the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. It can only be done by giving these teachings to other men just as they came from the Lord himself. His light must be reflected through us to the world of today just as the moon reflects the light of the sun. Yes,

Jesus came to serve God, to serve God by serving man, and the service that he came to render was that of bringing man to God. If we are his followers, we must be servants. We must serve God, and the only service that God wants upon the earth is that service which will lead men to honor and glorify him. Are those of us who claim to be Christians doing that? Is it our one purpose in life to influence people to honor God in their lives? Are we making the things that we have contribute to that purpose? Have we qualified ourselves to render such a service? Have we studied God's word? Are we trying to live God's word? Are we trying to teach God's word to our fellows? Fail to do this and as Christians we have failed.

May we not forget that we are seeking the answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" or, "What must you do to be saved?" If you are really serious in your desire to have the right answer to this question, pause here and breathe a prayer to God that you may not be deceived and caused to accept anything that is not true, but that in the sincerity of your heart you may be honest enough to receive the truth and apply it personally.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON 5

1. Give the early evidences that Jesus came to save.
2. Give Jesus' testimony that he came as a saviour.
3. Give the apostle's testimony that Jesus' mission was to save.
4. Though perfection is not expected of us what is expected?
5. In terms of this lesson what question ought each one to ask himself?
6. If we are to show Jesus to the world as a saviour what else must also show in our lives?
7. What must happen with us before we can show to others that Jesus has brought good tidings of great joy?
8. Describe carefully the ways that we may show that he has brought good tidings to us.
9. What will make the joy of Christianity a reality to us?
10. What other expression of Jesus' mission lends emphasis to the fact that Jesus came to save and also that this is our real mission?
11. What has probably been most responsible for the fact that only a small percentage of the people have accepted Christianity?
12. Point to evidences in the context of this statement that Jesus was to be our example.
13. If he is to be our example as a servant in what else is he also our example?
14. What service did God want rendered upon the earth?
15. Jesus' service to God was rendered directly to whom?
16. What was Jesus' part of this service?
17. Our service to God today must be rendered to whom?
18. Give two figures of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount that indicate that we are to continue his service?
19. Whom can we not expect to render such a service?
20. Under what condition only may we think of ourselves as servants of God?

LESSON 6

JESUS CAME TO SEND A SWORD

We shall make an effort to learn more about God's plan and its personal meaning by continuing the study of Jesus' mission. This time our attention is called to an unusual statement of Jesus' mission. "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34).

Some people who have become roughly militant in their handling of the word of God quote this statement in justification of their procedure. Is this in keeping with the meaning that our Saviour intended to convey? Let us first examine the context. Now Jesus had selected the twelve and taught them and was ready to send them forth under the limited commission to teach the Jews. They had been with him somewhat protected and sustained in their group association. He had met the attacks of the enemy. They had not become acquainted too well with the problems and difficulties. Now he was about to send them forth among the people. They should know something of the difficulties and conditions under which they would have to work. He had instructed them of their needs and of their dwelling arrangements. He had warned them of the persecutions that were ahead. He had advised them to be as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves. He had admonished them not to fear them that

can kill the body only, but him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. He had assured them of the Father's protecting care. He had reminded them that, "Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32-33). With all this, it was important that they understand the true nature and power of his teaching which they were carrying forth into the world, and know something of the conditions which would result. As a part of his instructions Jesus warned, "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth." He did not want them to be misled by former ideas.

The Jews, including the twelve, had been taught that the Messiah would restore peace among the Jews with prosperity and untold blessings. They had misunderstood the nature of his kingdom. They expected him to re-establish the earthly kingdom of David. In fact, only a short time after this, on witnessing the feeding of the five thousand, they said, "This is of a truth the prophet that cometh into the world" (John 6:14) and, "Jesus therefore perceiving that they were about to come and take him by force, to make him king, withdrew again into the mountain himself alone" (John 6:15). So Jesus would correct this false idea and impress upon the twelve that he had not come for this purpose, that his mission was not to establish peace within the Jewish nation. He would not have them think that he came in the interest of earthly peace; on the contrary, he came to send a sword.

Jesus came to send a teaching—ideas, vital ideas that would carry conviction and he knew that they would be the most vital forces among men. He knew that some people would accept these ideas. He knew that others would not. He knew that they would contradict ideas that had already become vital among the people. He knew the results would be divisions and strife; yea, even within families. He explained his statement somewhat as he continued by saying, “For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law: and a man’s foes shall be they of his own household” (Matt. 10:35-36). Certainly Jesus did not mean that his ultimate goal was that of disorganizing families. He did not come to sever the ties that sustain the home, the institution which God gave man for his happiness and which has been found to be the basic unit of society. He came to save man’s soul by presenting to him facts about his origin, his present condition, and his future possibilities through the love of God, that were so vital to man, when accepted as true, that he would hold on to them even though the strongest and most precious of family relationships should be dissolved, and those who were dearest of earth would become his enemies. This is one of the severest tests of the real power in the word of God. Jesus said that this would happen and it did. This was true, violently true in the days when religious teaching carried conviction. The same would be true today if people accepted Jesus’ teaching with a greater degree of realism, if they respected his authority, set their hearts on honor-

ing him, and appreciated the fact that faithfulness to his teaching is their only opportunity.

It is true that in some ways conditions are quite different religiously today than they were among the Jews in the days when Jesus gave this description. The twelve were being sent among people who had acquired strong convictions to the contrary, who had been thoroughly schooled in the forms of a different religion, the nature of its teaching permitted or encouraged the use of force against all opposition. Today, under very different political and civil conditions, the picture is somewhat different. In many of the civilized nations of the world such violence to the body might never be met, but the principles are still applicable and the dangers are still serious. The closer our relationships among men, such as family relationship or strong ties of friendship, the more grave the danger to our spiritual life if our associates reject Jesus' teaching as a whole or in part. As Jesus said, "A man's foes shall be they of his own household." The people who are closest to us are those who will influence us most. Their influence may not appear as a direct opposition to our believing that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, but it may be an influence that will sap our fidelity, chill our zeal, lead us to neglect our privilege of Christian service, or to practice or to condone that which is unbecoming. We should remember that our God is a jealous God and expects from us complete fidelity. Jesus knew that our love for those who are near us and dear to us might come between us and our God.

In Jesus' next statement he gives the real principle

involved. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that doth not take his cross and follow after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 10:37-39). If one's faith in Jesus' teaching does not cause him to attach such value to the facts revealed in the gospel and such reality to the love of God that his new relationship in the divine family is esteemed above his human relationships, even those that are dearest to him, he is not worthy of the gospel of Christ. Any person who is not drawn to God with a love that is strong enough to turn him away from erroneous ideas held by his family or friends is not worthy of the Lord Jesus Christ and his love. Anyone who is not willing to give up illicit or adulterous family relationships is not worthy of the name Christian.

Let us notice the first part of Jesus' statement again, "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth." Since God is called the God of peace and Jesus is called the Prince of Peace; since Jesus' teaching is known as the Gospel of Peace, and since the heavenly host sang to the shepherds, "Peace on earth good will to men"; and since the Bible teaches us, and our experience agrees, "How pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity," I wonder if we have fully grasped the meaning of Jesus' statement. I wonder if many have not been led to believe that when Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God" (Matt. 5:9), that he meant making peace among men, pouring oil upon the

troubled waters, helping to adjust family and community or national affairs. Is this the sort of peacemakers Jesus expects his followers to be? Or should they be peacemakers in the same sense that Jesus was?

Jesus did not come to settle differences, and to restore harmony in the earthly relationships. On one occasion, "One out of the multitude said unto him, Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me. But he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" (Luke 12:13-14). Jesus refused to take part in settling the family difficulty. To have settled such a matter would have been to restore peace to the family. It would have been temporary, thus Jesus shows that he was not sent for such a purpose, but takes that occasion to give them one principle of the teaching which he came to bring that would give permanent peace, peace to the individual, peace which passeth understanding. "And he said unto them, Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). Covetousness is the root of much of man's trouble.

Jesus came to teach man how to have peace with God, peace within his own soul, eternal peace, not peace in earthly relationships, not the removing of all trials and difficulties and hardships, and disappointments. He came to fill man's heart with that teaching, with that hope and that joy of knowing that he is the son of the Almighty God, that would maintain an inner peace, regardless of his losses, his disappointments, his suffering, his persecutions; and would give to him a happiness that the world

will never know. It was in this confidence that the apostles and early disciples could rejoice. It was in the strength of the Prince of Peace that Paul and Silas, with their backs bruised and probably bleeding, and their feet made fast in the stocks, in the inner part of the Roman prison at Philippi could, and did, at mid-night, sing praises to their God. No, Jesus has not promised his followers freedom from the cares and problems of this life, nor peaceable relationships with all their fellows, but he has promised them a peace of conscience that will lead them to find joy even in their sorrow.

Do we have this peace? And are we striving to give this peace to our fellows? Are we true peacemakers, or have we been decoyed into giving our attention to the temporary peace which comes from the adjustment of human difficulties, even to the extent of compromising the truth and sacrificing our own right to the peace that Jesus gives? There is nothing wrong in wanting harmony, and especially among the brethren, but in all cases the result should be obtained by the application of the true principles of Jesus' teaching. Through it all, we should never forget that many times his teaching will cleave asunder as a sword. Where this is the result, we should be careful to see that it is due to the nature of the teaching, and not to the crude, rough, un-Christian way in which it is handled. We should never forget that Jesus came to save. His followers should never veer from this purpose.

Before we leave the subject there are two other passages of scripture to which we should refer. One of them

sets forth in different terms the same idea as the one that we have just discussed. "I came to cast fire upon the earth; and what do I desire, if it is already kindled? But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! Think ye that I am come to give peace in the earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: for there shall be from henceforth five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. They shall be divided, father against son, and son against father; mother against daughter, and daughter against her mother; mother in law against her daughter in law, and daughter in law against her mother in law" (Luke 12:49-53).

What Jesus meant by the first statement and question is not fully clear. However, since the statement is figurative and the question is followed by a figurative statement referring to Jesus' suffering which is for the cleansing of man from sin, it appears likely that his first statement refers to the suffering among men in the process of working out their final purification, and that in some measure it had already begun. Whether we understand these figures or not it is apparent that they provide an introduction to the teaching that follows. We should certainly expect it to be in harmony with and support it. The teaching that follows is the same as the lesson from Matthew which we have just considered.

The next passage which I mention has also been quoted at times to justify harshness, abuse, and condemnation in which the personal element seems unmistakably present. "And Jesus said, For judgment came I into this world,

that they that see not may see; and that they that see may become blind" (John 9:39). To use this passage for any such purpose, is nothing short of a dishonest handling of God's word. One is simply reading his own meaning into the first clause for which the meaning is provided in the remainder of Jesus' statement. The judgment for which Jesus came was that they that see not may see, and that they that see may become blind. This statement was made after the man who was born blind had been healed and had been cast out of the synagogue. It was made in his presence, and in the presence of the Pharisees, the two classes of people who are represented in Jesus' statement.

The blind man had been physically blind and had been made to see. He had also been spiritually blind, and had come to see. The Pharisees were spiritually blind, but claimed to see, and so long as they claimed to see, so long as they were satisfied with their past ideas, the nature of Jesus' teaching was so different they were blinded to the truth. The one who recognizes that he does not know, and is interested, is ready to learn. The one who is fully content with his own present ideas, which are contrary to the teachings of Christ, is blind to the simplicity and purity of the gospel.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON 6

1. What were the conditions under which Jesus said, "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth. I came not to send peace, but a sword"?
2. What erroneous idea did the Jews, even the disciples, hold in regard to Jesus' mission?
3. How did the Jews show that they expected the Messiah to be king?
4. What did Jesus come to send, and how did it work as a sword?
5. What is one of the severest tests of the real power in the word of God?
6. In what sense today are a man's foes those of his own household?
7. With what comparison does Jesus show how much his disciples must love him?
8. What relationship must be esteemed and honored above all human relationships?
9. Harmonize the statement, "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth" and, "Peace on earth good will to men."
10. Of whom was Jesus speaking when he said, "Blessed are the peacemakers"?
11. In what instance did Jesus refuse to be a family peacemaker?
12. Describe the peace which Jesus came to bring.
13. What indicates that he brought this peace to the early disciples?
14. How only can this true peace be obtained?
15. When our use of God's word causes division, we should be careful to see that it is due to what and not to what?
16. Mention two other similar passages that are sometimes used to justify a discourteous manner in teaching God's word.
17. In the second passage, in what sense did Jesus come for a judgment.

LESSON 7

JESUS CAME TO CALL SINNERS

In our study of Jesus' mission thus far we have learned that Jesus came to save and not to judge or condemn, for the world stood condemned already. Certainly we should not forget that our mission is to honor God by living such lives that others may see our good works and be constrained to glorify him; that it is not our purpose to condemn the world but to save the world. Jesus did not come to be served by man but to serve man. We have also seen that Jesus did not come to send peace on the earth as the Jews had expected but to send a sword. We should understand from this figurative statement of Jesus' mission that there are those among men who will refuse his mission of mercy, reject the pleadings of God's love, and oppose his teaching with such violence that the strongest of human ties will be rent asunder, thus proving the strength of a true Christian conviction and testifying to the power of the gospel through the fidelity of those who truly believe it.

We come now to consider a fourth statement of Jesus' mission. Like the other three, it is given greater emphasis and clarity by being expressed in the form of a contrast. "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17). This was part of Jesus' answer to the Pharisees' question about his eating with publicans and sinners. It not only

provided a full justification of his association with sinners, but expressed Jesus' mission with reference to the class of people whom he came to save. Jesus did not come to call the righteous, for were they truly righteous they would have no need of him. This he had made clear in the proverbial expression which he had used just before making his statement. "They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick" (Mark 2:17). Since these Pharisees considered themselves righteous, felt no guilt of sin, recognized no need of a saviour, they were not subject to his call. In declaring to these Pharisees who thought they were whole that the whole have no need of a physician, the lesson is strongly implied that they who think they are whole have no need of a physician. So long as a man thinks he is in health he feels no need of a physician, and so long as he feels no need of a physician, he will not make proper use of one. Hence, it appears safe to say that Jesus came not to call the righteous, nor those who think they are righteous, but he came to call sinners, those who recognize that they are sinners.

We sometimes hear a sermon on the great invitation in which many points are stated in evidence of its greatness. It is great because it came from a great source. It is great because it invites to a great occasion. It is great because of its scope, because it includes everybody. These statements all sound good. But is the last one correct? Jesus' invitation says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my

yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30). Here Jesus does not say, "Come unto me everybody," but, "all ye that labor and are heavy laden." All that feel the need, all that have become conscious of their sins and sinful condition, all that are spiritually sick and recognize it are invited to come to the Great Physician. How could others come in full sincerity? How could one become penitent without any recognition of his wrong? Why should one seek to be saved when he knows of no danger? How can such a one receive the gospel as good tidings of great joy? Of what burden has he been relieved, or what condemnation has been removed of which he is conscious, that he may be made to rejoice? From what sense of guilt has his conscience been cleansed? Why should he accept the advice of the Great Physician? How can he in humility render that wholehearted service that will be acceptable to his God?

I sometimes wonder if our zeal for saving the sinner and for increasing the number in the church has not caused us to stretch Jesus' invitation. In emphasizing the outward act of religion, have we minimized or overlooked the equally imperative inner condition in proclaiming Jesus' teaching? It is true that Jesus said, "Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32-33). Certainly this teaching should be taught but should never be divorced from its true relationship. Is it possible that we stress the act of confession, picturing the glories of

being confessed in the presence of God and depicting the terrible state of affairs when one is denied by the only begotten Son of God, until the hearer, impelled by the force of human logic and swayed by the influence of the emotions reluctantly yields to our insistence? Does the importance of the act cause us momentarily to forget the condition out of which the act must come? In declaring that "with the mouth confession is made unto salvation," do we overlook the fact that this is only true when, "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Rom. 10: 10)?

I have heard the preacher in his zeal for the work of the church declare that there were probably some in the audience who were good people, who were already living right, who had no particular need for changing in their way of living, but that they must confess Christ or he would refuse to confess them before the Father. Though this might not be so intended by the preacher, it might be easily interpreted by the hearer that his great need is to technically comply with stated arbitrary conditions or be damned. Certainly one must obey God by confessing Christ, but not as a technicality. It should be a natural result of his inner condition. It should be a fruit of the seed of the kingdom which is the word of God. He should believe the word with that reality that carries a conviction and results in action. The word works in them that believe it. "And for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that, when ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which

also worketh in you that believe" (I Thess. 2:13). Another thing wrong with such an idea is that it is false. Among those who have not accepted Christ, there is no one who is living right in the sense that he is living without sin. "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we before laid to the charge both of Jews and Greeks, that they are all under sin" (Rom. 3:9). "For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (I John 1:8). Thus each one must be convicted of sin. He must be caused to feel the need of the Great Physician. He must "come to himself" as did the prodigal son (Luke 15:17), then in penitence and humility he is willing and ready to accept the place of a servant.

Another device that is sometimes used in evangelistic efforts is to depict the happiness that would be caused by such a step. How happy it would make one's father or mother, one's husband or wife; yes, and how much joy there would be among the angels in heaven. It is true that there should be happiness among God's people. It is true that there will be joy among the angels when a sinner repents, not merely when a human confesses. It is a grave matter to allow our emphasis to get misplaced. It results in a misrepresentation of the truth, and may lead to destruction rather than salvation.

The reason for stressing such matters is to be found in the conditions that exist among religious people today. If what we can see outwardly in the lives of people in anywise depicts their inner condition, it is evident that

with many, religion is only a form from the beginning, and with thousands of others it very hurriedly degenerates until it becomes nominal. It is no wonder that the church has fallen into so much disrepute with the people of the world. So far as the invitation is concerned, we must teach his word in such a manner as to make them realize that they are sinners, that they have a need of a saviour, and that they continue to have a need for a saviour. Such a need does not end with baptism.

Jesus not only taught that he came to call sinners, but he stated in regard to the work of the Holy Spirit, "And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8). Since this spirit was sent to guide the teaching and was to convict the world of sin, those who use the teaching should not overlook this purpose. It matters not how near or dear someone is to us, it matters not how much we would like to see one confess the Lord Jesus Christ, he is not prepared to do so until he is made to recognize that he is a sinner. May we depend upon the word of God, the seed of the kingdom, to produce its increase without the need of too much supplemental reasoning from the conditions that exist or the results that follow.

The need of this inner condition is given more emphasis in Matthew's record. "But go ye and learn what this meaneth, I desire mercy, and not sacrifice: for I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matt. 9:13). Here the fact that Jesus came not to call the righteous but sinners is pointed out as the reason for the Pharisees learning that Jesus desired mercy and not sacrifice. This

being true, there must be a relationship between this fact and the lesson that they should learn. What is it? What is the difference between the righteous without Jesus, or those who thought they were righteous, and sinners? Sinners are people who recognize themselves as being objects of mercy, those who are seeking to have their burden removed, those who can appreciate God's great love and mercy in sending Jesus to save them from their sins. These are the people who have been touched by the mercy of God and whose own experience will incline them to show mercy. These are the people who can truly rejoice in the consciousness that their sins are forgiven. These are they who are qualified to show mercy to others. This is what Jesus desired rather than sacrifice. His desire was not merely that people should carry out certain acts of worship but that they should become a certain sort of people; that they should be activated in their whole lives by the spirit of love and mercy, the spirit which he came to show the world, the spirit that all must have if they are to be his. Yes, the lesson that those Pharisees needed to learn was a very vital one. It is still vital to you and to me and to everyone who would enter into life. Jesus desires mercy and not sacrifice. He desires that quality of heart and life which he exemplified. He declared in his sermon on the mount, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. 5:7). Certainly our only hope is to be found in the mercy of God. If we fail to obtain his mercy whatever else we may do we shall fail completely. So we must learn to be merciful and the recognition of our own sinfulness and need for mercy

should help to mold us into creatures that will show mercy to others.

We have one other record of the fact that Jesus came to call sinners. "I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32). Here we have the added thought that it was to repentance. He came to call sinners to repentance. Since all are sinners, he wants all to repent. He did not come to call sinners to glory but to repentance, for until they repent they are not forgiven. Until you repent you are not forgiven. Until I repent I am not forgiven.

There is another fact suggested by the declaration that Jesus came to call sinners that should not be overlooked. The gospel plan of salvation was made for sinners, not merely made to include sinners. It was, and is, the power of God unto salvation. It is to save sinners. It is the power that is sufficient to save any sinner regardless of how sinful he is if he will accept it into his heart and life. (Man sets its only limitation by his failure or refusal to give it honest and unbiased attention.) However, it is unable to save the least sinful of men unless it is personally received. Then let us recognize that we must take the teaching personally. It is not only the power to save the alien from his sins but also to save the erring child of God from the sinful influences of this world and to call us to repentance when we sin.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON 7

1. What is our fourth statement of Jesus' mission and under what conditions was it made?
2. What proverbial expression did Jesus use to support it?
3. Whom does Jesus seem to include in those whom he did not come to call?
4. Whom did Jesus include in his great invitation?
5. Why could others not be included?
6. In our efforts to save sinners, what may we have minimized or overlooked?
7. Only under what condition is it true that, "with the mouth confession is made unto salvation"?
8. Christ should not be confessed as a technicality but as a result of what?
9. Give evidence that everyone needs Christ in reality and not to confess him as a technicality.
10. Why is it dangerous to appeal to a sinner to confess Christ because of the happiness it will cause?
11. Mention some conditions that have probably resulted from confession without conversion.
12. Why do people need to realize that they are sinners?
13. What is part of Jesus' description of the work of the Holy Spirit when it was to come?
14. What must we depend upon to produce increase in the kingdom of God?
15. Matthew gives the fact that Jesus came not to call the righteous but sinners as a reason for the Pharisees learning what?
16. What is there in common between recognizing one is a sinner and learning that Jesus desired mercy and not sacrifice?
17. Wherein does man's only hope lie?
18. Unto what did Jesus come to call sinners?
19. For whom was the gospel plan of salvation made?

LESSON 8

JESUS CAME TO TAKE AWAY SIN

In our study of Jesus' mission for the purpose of better understanding God's teaching as it applies to me and to you individually, we have learned the following: Jesus came to save, and that should be the influence of every Christian. Jesus came to serve God by serving man and so should we. Jesus' teaching was to cause division, and we should be faithful to it even at the cost of family discord or even separation. Jesus came to call sinners, he came to call sinners to repentance. Therefore, his teaching should be used to cause men to see their sinfulness and to lead them to repentance.

After Jesus had been baptized of John in the river Jordan, and tempted of Satan in the wilderness, he returned to the place where John was baptizing and, "On the morrow he seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). This is the testimony of John the Baptist when he first announced Jesus to the people. These people to whom John was speaking were living under a law which required animal sacrifice for sin. The high priest entered into the most holy place with the blood of the animal that had been sacrificed for the sin of the people of Israel; an offering that could not take away sin. In contrast to this John announced an offering that could

take away sin, not only the sin of the people of Israel, but the sin of the world. Since the former offerings could not take away sin, they were offered continually, but it was only necessary for this offering to be offered once. This was the Lamb of God, the offering that could make full purification for sin. Thus Jesus was the sacrifice to take away sin, the final sacrifice for sin. This being true, the sin offerings under the law were no longer necessary. The old priesthood was no longer necessary. Thus Christ fulfilled the law and took it out of the way when he was nailed to the cross where his blood was shed for the sin of the world.

Jesus was not only the sacrifice for the sin of the world, but he was manifested to take away sins. John tells us, "Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. And ye know that he was manifested to take away sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither knoweth him" (I John 3:4-6). Since he came to call sinners, it was necessary that their sin be taken away. He did not come to save man in his sin, but to save him from his sin. Until Jesus has taken a man's sins away, he cannot be saved. This is the means or process by which Jesus makes man acceptable to God and an heir of eternal salvation. Sin is that which has separated man from his God. Until it is removed from man he is no more acceptable to his God. Jesus did not come to pacify God that man might be permitted to continue in his sins, but he came to take away sins. That Jesus came as an offering for the sin of the world is a great thought, but it has little

value to us unless we allow ourselves to be brought into the vital relationship with the offering that it may accomplish with us that for which it was sent; that is, take away our sins.

For the present it does not appear necessary to analyze or explain the last statement of the quotation from John. "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither knoweth him." Suffice it to say that it gives emphasis to the fact that Jesus came to take away sins here and now; that man should set his heart to live above sin; that he should pattern his life after that of the only begotten Son of God. We shall not concern ourselves here with the question of sinless perfection, but rather with the question: How does Jesus take away sin?

A short time after the apostles had received the Holy Spirit to guide them in their teaching, Peter and John healed the lame man at the gate of the temple called Beautiful. While he held Peter and John, we are told that all the people ran together in Solomon's porch and there Peter began to teach. During his speech Peter explained how the man had been made whole and in telling of the power through which he was healed he told of Jesus, how that they had denied him and killed him, and that God had raised him up. He appealed to them to repent and turn again that their sins might be blotted out. He presented other evidence that Jesus was the one whom they should accept and the last thought which he presented before he was interrupted by his enemies was expressed in these words, "Unto you first God, having

raised up his Servant, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities" (or sins) (Acts 3:26). How does Peter tell these people that Jesus was to bless them? He was to bless them, "in turning away every one of you from your iniquities"; that is, in turning them away from their sinful practices. So long as they continued in their sins Jesus would be no blessing to them. The same thing is true with us. Unless Jesus' teaching means enough to us that we turn away from our sins, we have no promise of forgiveness.

In the first part of his letter to the Christian people who had been scattered over many of the provinces of Asia Minor by the persecution Peter had this to say: "And if ye call on him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to each man's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear: knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ" (I Peter 1:17-19). In reminding these people of the kind of lives they should live Peter gives as his reason that they have been redeemed from their vain manner of life handed down from their fathers. They had been redeemed or purchased from their vain or worthless manner of life. Their lives had been spent in their own personal enjoyment or to secure their own human desires. They had been living lives according to their own planning which would in the end bring them no benefit. Jesus had redeemed them, had turned them away from their iniquities, so Peter ad-

monished that they should live apart from those things. In teaching the Corinthian people the exceeding sinfulness of fornication, Paul made it clear that they had been redeemed from all such when they became Christians. "Or know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body" (I Cor. 6:19-20).

In his letter to Titus, Paul expressed Jesus' purpose in giving himself for us in these words, "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). Here Jesus, we are told, gave himself to purchase a people for his own possession, that he purchased or redeemed them from all iniquities; that is, by virtue of the purchase they have pledged themselves to leave that which is evil, to turn away from their sin, to shun the appearance of evil; thus, with his help becoming purified that they may be a people worthy of his possession. Furthermore, by virtue of his gift and the influence it has over their hearts, they should be zealous of good works. They should want to do good. They should be a people with an interest and enthusiastic zeal for the opportunity to do that which is good. This is the characteristic of the people for God's possession. Do you and I have it? Do we seek to do good?

This is certainly a far cry from the condition we find among many people who call themselves Christians today. This picture of what Jesus came to do for, and to, those who would become his followers is certainly in contrast

to the idea held by many people. Many seem to have an erroneous conception of Jesus' mission. They seem to think that he came to establish an institution, the church; he arbitrarily postulated certain conditions of membership, faith, repentance, confession, and baptism; and like all human institutions every person who has complied with the conditions of membership share in the privileges and advantages offered; that is, by virtue of church membership one shall have a right to the tree of life and shall enter in through the gate into the city. In other words, to these people religion is a form or ritual. They have compressed their religion into a very small corner of their lives. They attend church largely as a duty. Some attend regularly at the morning service. Some do not so well, are frequently absent, seldom or never at Sunday Bible school, attend at night during protracted meetings only, are simply too busy to attend mid-week meeting, read their Bible occasionally or never, will behave with respect during prayer at church, but seldom or never resort to private prayer. So far as song service is concerned, it is little more than an opportunity to come in late or leave early. The basis for their interest in helping others is some mutual human relationship such as family or friends. The major part of their giving is for the purpose of securing social approval and generally given through human organizations. The idea of their being any real assistance in teaching the gospel to others is altogether foreign to their thinking. They generally give to needy individuals only when they cannot suggest some other person from whom the help may be obtained or some general source of supply. Have these

people become “zealous of good work”? How can such people feel that they are prepared or are preparing, or are being prepared for God’s “own possession”? Are we like them? Do you or I resemble them in some of these failures?

In contrast to this sort of a selfish life we should be impressed with Paul’s short but striking description of the life of a Christian. “For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and he died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again” (II Cor. 5:14-15). He died for us, we should live for him. This is the purpose of every Christian. Anyone who fails to make this the sincere purpose of his life and bases his hope on anything less, I am afraid has a false hope. Such a life lacks sincerity and is a misrepresentation of the truth. Paul accomplished this so well that he declared, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me” (Gal. 2:20).

In writing to the Roman people Paul presented reasoning which showed the absurdity of those who had accepted the Lord Jesus Christ continuing in sin. “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein? Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through

baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection; knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin; for he that hath died is justified from sin. But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him; knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death no more hath dominion over him. For the death that he died, he died unto sin once: but the life that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus.

“Let no sin herefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof: neither present your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under law, but under grace” (Rom. 6:1-14).

Paul presses his lesson here by asking a question which portrays an irreconcilable inconsistency. The person who has truly died to sin, separated himself from sin, how can he continue to live in it? How can he continue in that from which he has been separated? Then he proceeds to show that those who had been baptized into Christ had died to sin. He introduces his reasoning by a question which suggests that their being ignorant of what actually

had happened in the process of coming into Christ was the only condition that would permit them to hold to such contradictory ideas; that is, having come into Christ and not having died to sin. If they understood that in being baptized into Christ they were baptized into his death, they should know that they had been separated from sin and should no longer live therein. To refresh their memory on the matter he draws a parallel between Christ's death, burial, and resurrection and their acceptance of the gospel.

In verse four he describes what happened in summary form, making two facts stand out in bold relief: it was a burial and was followed by newness of life, a new way of living. In verse five he shows that being in the likeness of his resurrection necessitates being united with him in the likeness of his death. He next makes known that being in the likeness of his death is accomplished by the old man being crucified with him that they "should no longer be in bondage to sin." In verse eight it is evident that the hope to live with him rests in part upon the fact that they died with him. Having established the fact that they died with him, he then declares "he died unto sin" and draws the conclusion, "even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus."

This is followed by a strong appeal to the Roman Christians to serve God in righteousness and not to allow sin to have dominion over them. Paul made the same appeal to the Christians in Colossae. "If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind

on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:1-3).

There is another statement of Jesus' mission that gives emphasis to this same thought, "He that doeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (I John 3:8). Although Jesus came to save, we see that in order for him to save it is necessary for him to destroy. He must destroy, he must eradicate that which is of such a nature that it cannot be saved. What must Jesus do to accomplish this end? In fact, what are the works of the devil? And how are they being done? We hear people speak of the devil, we see pictures of that monstrosity wearing horns and a forked tail, that has been concocted to symbolize the devil, but that picture exists only on paper or the canvas, we never find such working among us. John tells us that "He that doeth sin is of the devil." Thus sin is the work of the devil, and man is the devil's direct agent through which his work is done. To the extent that man has turned away from his sin, or his sin is taken away, the works of the devil have been destroyed. So long as men continue in their sins, the works of the devil are being done. To be sure, when evil men are destroyed the works of the devil will be completely done away. The man whose heart will allow him to continue in sin, even though he has confessed Jesus to be the Son of God, even though he does take some part in religious activities, is still doing the works of the devil. In fact, if one claims to be a follower of Christ and is still continuing

to practice those things that should not be done, or continuing to ignore the plea that Jesus made to do the things that should be done, he is working more effectively for the devil than the person who makes no claim to Christianity. Jesus made it plain that we cannot serve both God and the devil, for we cannot serve two masters. Our God is a jealous God and so long as we are willing to work for the devil we cannot work acceptably for him. "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth" (Matt. 12:30). Have we allowed Jesus to destroy the works of the devil in us?

In view of the thoughts presented above may every person who claims to be a worshiper of God through the Lord Jesus Christ never forget Peter's admonition, "And if ye call on him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to each man's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear: knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ" (I Peter 1:17-19). How can we believe this and knowingly continue in sin? Or how can we accept it as Bible knowledge and be careless or indifferent in our way of living? For the sake of our own souls and also our influence on others may we come to know that Jesus came to take away our sins and realize that he has not done so if we continue to live in them. May we use this as a measure to try ourselves as Paul admonished the Corinthians to do. "Try your own selves, whether ye are in the faith; prove your own selves. Or

know ye not as to your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you? unless indeed ye be reprobate" (II Cor. 13:5).

QUESTIONS ON LESSON 8

1. Who announced that Jesus was to take away the sin of the world?
2. What else did Jesus take away by this offering?
3. Why was it necessary for Jesus to take away man's sins?
4. When does the great thought that Jesus came to take away sins become valuable to us?
5. What statement from John's epistle gives emphasis to the fact that Jesus came to take sins here and now?
6. Give briefly the content of Peter's speech in Solomon's porch and tell how Jesus was to bless the people?
7. What must Jesus' teaching do for us in order to bring us forgiveness?
8. From what did Peter tell the people to whom he wrote his first epistle that they had been redeemed?
9. What reason did Paul give to the Corinthian people that they should avoid fornication?
10. What reason did Paul give to Titus for Jesus having redeemed us from iniquity?
11. What erroneous conception of Jesus' mission seems to be held by many?
12. List some of the conditions found among people who call themselves Christians that indicate that they do hold such an erroneous idea?
13. Give Paul's brief description of the life of a Christian.
14. How does Paul describe his own life in terms of this?
15. In discussing this matter with the Roman people on what condition did Paul say we shall be in the likeness of Christ's resurrection?
16. How should the Romans think of themselves with respect to sin and with respect to God?
17. What irreconcilable inconsistency does Paul present?
18. How does Paul impress the fact that they have died to sin?

19. How did Paul describe to the Colossians their change when they accepted Christ?
20. Quote another statement of Jesus' mission which shows that Jesus came to take away sins.
21. How are the works of the devil accomplished?
22. What admonition of Peter in this connection should Christians never forget?
23. What test did Paul suggest to the Corinthians?

LESSON 9

JESUS CAME TO RECONCILE TO GOD

Let us now consider Jesus' mission from a slightly different angle. Jesus came that man might be reconciled unto God. "But all things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:18-19). "For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell; and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross; through him, I say, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens" (Col 1:19-20). "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life; and not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation" (Rom. 5:9-11). This expression of Jesus' mission is stated differently from the others which we have considered. An examination of the quotations given shows God as the one doing the reconciling through Christ.

We might be able to better understand this expression of Jesus' mission if we recall a bit of the history of the case. In the beginning of man's history we find him closely associated with God. God walked in the garden and man talked with him. The record of their association and their relationship is brief, but what we have indicates that there was harmony and friendship between man and his Maker. God had provided all things for man's comfort and happiness and had instructed him in those things that would be pleasing to him. He had given him a work to do, to dress and to keep the garden. (Gen. 2:15). He had instructed him in that which he should not do, not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17). In view of God's blessing to man we must think of these teachings as those from a friend. So far as our record indicates man accomplished that which God had given him to do thus respecting God's word and fulfilling his part of their mutual relationship. However, in the instruction not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, man did not treat God's word as the word of a friend. He did not show that respect to God that must be shown by a friend. He did that which was contrary to God's wishes and instruction. This showed that he was not his friend. When man had thus shown that he was false to that relationship, God removed him from the garden. Man's own selfish interest had estranged him from his Creator. He had rejected the wisdom of God and followed his own wisdom or wishes. He had allowed himself to come between him and his God; but not between God and him. Though he had proven himself unworthy of the

relationship and was driven out of the garden, he was still the recipient of God's blessings, blessings such as he was capable of using. Thus we see that man has estranged himself from God, but God has not estranged himself from man. He is not man's enemy. As portrayed in the passages quoted above, he "was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." Christ did not come that God might be reconciled unto the world, but that those of the world, who would, might be reconciled unto God. It is not necessary for us to plead with God to accept man, but with man to accept God. Hence, in our efforts to fulfill our mission as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have no need to plead with God to accept man, but should plead with man to accept God.

We have already seen that Jesus came to save sinners by turning them away from their sins. We have already emphasized that such a truth forbids any serious minded person from thinking of Christianity as a form of religion, or of church membership as a nominal thing. But it demands that Christianity be accepted as a philosophy of living, which must remold one's ideas, attitudes and practices. When we come to understand Jesus' mission as one of reconciliation, it will be evident that Christianity not only changes one's acts, one's thoughts, and one's ideals, but that it reaches into man's innermost nature and changes his attitudes. To reconcile man to God is to change him from an enemy to a friend. Basically this change must be a change in attitude. The final test of friendship is not to be found in what people do and say, but more in what they think and how they feel. We may

say nice things about a person, or do kind deeds for a person without being a real friend, but the attitude of our heart cannot be that of a friend without expressing itself in kind words or helpful deeds. An enemy has an attitude of hate; a friend has an attitude of love. Jesus came that people might become friends of God. To be followers of Christ, we must be friends of God.

Abraham was a friend of God and the father of the faithful. If we are truly friends of God, we likewise will be faithful. The expression, "an unfaithful friend" is paradoxical and simply means, "one believed to be a friend has shown himself to be false." If we are God's friends, we will do as Abraham did, we will respect God's word implicitly. We will honor it in our lives as the word of one we love. We will find pleasure in doing his teaching. If these things are not true of us then we should examine the matter whether or not we have truly been reconciled to God. This is the true meaning of friendship. Without it the friendly deed is a false gesture, a fake, and a form. Without the deed the attitude is non-existent, and any claim to possess it is false. We all know too well that a friend acts like a friend. That is, so far as he is able, your friend will do that which pleases you. If we are friends of God, so far as we are able, we will do those things which please him. Jesus told his apostles, "Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you" (John 15:14). If this lesson is correct, a man who claims to be a friend of God, a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is not trying to do those things which please God, is deceived and has not yet learned the meaning of Christianity

To accomplish this reconciliation, making man a friend of God and causing him to act like a friend, the basic change is repentance. The Greek word most commonly translated repentance in the New Testament (the one always used in telling man what to do to be saved) is defined by Thayer (in his Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament) as "a change of mind." Man had the mind of the flesh. Paul told the Romans that, "The mind of the flesh is death; . . . because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God" (Rom. 8:6-7). This is the mind that is guided by human wisdom and motivated by fleshly impulses. It is the mind that turned man away from God. When Eve was not willing to be guided by the instruction that God had given her and made her decision in regard to eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil on the basis of her own human desires, it was good for food, a delight to the eyes and would make one wise (Gen. 3:6), she was following the mind of the flesh. This was enmity against God and this resulted in man's estrangement from God. So long as man continues to be controlled by such a human mental content placing his own selfish interests above all others and making his appraisals in terms of his own desires and satisfactions he will remain estranged from God. So long as he seeks his own glory, the glory of men, he cannot do otherwise. This was taught by Jesus in his question to the Jews. "How can ye believe, who receive glory one of another, and the glory that cometh from the only God ye seek not?" (John 5:44). Paul alludes to a group of such people in writing to the Philippians. "For many walk, of whom I told you

often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is perdition, whose god is the belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things” (Phil. 3:18-19).

In exhorting the Ephesians to be faithful, Paul draws a contrast between those who had repented and the Gentiles who had not. “This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye no longer walk as the Gentiles also walk, in the vanity of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart; who being past feeling gave themselves up to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye did not so learn Christ; if so be that ye heard him, and were taught in him, even as truth is in Jesus: that ye put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, that waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit; and that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind” (Eph. 4: 17-23). Here we see that these conditions among the Gentiles were the results of their walking “in the vanity of their mind.” They were thus “alienated from the life of God,” they were enemies of God. On the contrary the Ephesians had been taught that they should put away the old man and be renewed in the spirit of their mind, “and put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth” (Eph. 4:24). The Colossians were reminded that their condition before they were reconciled was the product of their mind. “And you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works, yet now hath he reconciled in

the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish and unreprouable before him" (Col. 1: 21-22).

Jesus described the process of reconciliation to his disciples in stating to them the conditions of discipleship. "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24). The change of mind so necessary to reconciliation is comprehended in the words, "Let him deny himself." In this expression "himself" is the direct object of deny and not the indirect object as it is in our most common usage. We generally follow himself with the name of that which is denied to himself as, "he denied himself a vacation." In Jesus' statement, "himself" is the thing denied and a reading of the context shows the meaning to be the disowning, discrediting, and discarding of one's selfish control over his own life. Instead of directing his own activities for his own glory and spending the blessings of God upon his own pleasures he has exalted God in his own thinking and consequently changed his mind measuring the values of life in terms of God's glory rather than his own desires. When a person has done this he has repented.

In speaking of repentance as a change of mind, we should understand that a mere fluctuation of thinking is not intended. It is not a partial change but a change that is complete and real resulting in an attitude of a friend of God which predisposes one to act a friend. Such a change in attitude from an enemy to a friend will certainly produce other changes, but these changes are not

repentance and should not be mistaken for it. They are fruits of repentance. Where there is true repentance there will be the fruits of repentance also. They are evidences that one has repented. In the beginning of the new teaching when John the Baptist preached the baptism of repentance we are told, "He said therefore to the multitudes that went out to be baptized of him, Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And even now the axe also lieth at the root of the trees: every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. And the multitudes asked him, saying, What then must we do? And he answered and said unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath food, let him do likewise. And there came also publicans to be baptized, and they said unto him, Teacher, what must we do? And he said unto them, Extort no more than that which is appointed you. And soldiers also asked him, saying, And we, what must do? And he said unto them, Extort from no man by violence, neither accuse any one wrongfully; and be content with your wages" (Luke 3:7-14). This is the most detailed record of John's preaching on repentance. He warns these Jews not to trust in the fact that they are descendents of Abraham but make their repentance real and "bring forth fruits worthy of repentance." The results of the failure to do this is depicted in strong figurative

speech. "Every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." The fruit is the measure of the tree as the lives they live is the measure of them. If their repentance did not cause them to produce good fruits they would be destroyed.

What are the fruits of repentance? Certainly the first would be to turn from those practices that are displeasing to our friend; or, in other words, to turn away from our wickedness. God abhors that which is evil and sent his Son to destroy the works of the devil; hence, he would teach us through the apostle Paul to, "Abhor that which is evil" (Rom. 12:9). If I were a friend of God, him who is high and holy, certainly I would feel the need of rising above the low, mean, and impure things of life. And, if this is not the intention of my heart, have I truly repented? Have I changed my mind to that of a friend?

A second fruit of repentance is that of restitution, a behavior that is frequently overlooked. Somehow we seem to be obsessed with the idea that upon our willingness to confess Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, and accept the ordinance of baptism that all of our misdeeds of the past have been blotted from our record without any effort upon our part to correct the wrongs that we have done. How can we bring ourselves to believe that a just and holy God will graciously receive us into his family as his children when our hearts have not been softened with a compassion and a sense of fairness to our fellow creatures? How could I ever feel that God would forgive my stealing if I were not ready and willing to restore that which I had taken that belonged to another? If I were

not of the mind to undo in so far as I am able the wrong I have done, have I truly repented? How could such a life ever become truly compatible with God's way?

A third fruit of repentance is certainly a practice of those things that please our God; a doing of those things that he would have us do, and in the way that he would have them done. If one's mind has changed from that of an enemy to that of a friend, it would certainly lead him to aid his friend in accomplishing what he has set his heart to do. We have already learned that God wants man saved from his sins so what better way can we find to show our repentance, to show that our thinking has turned from ourselves to God, than to do those things that will lead others to turn to God. Thus studying God's word, worshiping him, encouraging others to do the same, helping those who are in need, etc., are fruits worthy of repentance. They show that we have followed the instruction that Paul gave to both Jews and Gentiles, "Repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance" (Acts 26:20).

Someone may ask, "What about godly sorrow? I thought that was repentance." Paul gives us the answer to this question. "For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, a repentance which bringeth no regret: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (II Cor. 7:10). Here we are told that, "Godly sorrow worketh repentance." Hence, it is not repentance but works repentance; that is, the sorrow that we have when we are made to understand that we have sinned against God who has done so much for us works within us changing our thoughts or minds and

the purpose of our hearts to honor God and produce the fruits of repentance. Thus godly sorrow is not repentance; turning away from sin is not repentance; restitution is not repentance; and serving God is not repentance; but all have their part in true repentance, which is the basis of reconciliation.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON 9

1. Give Bible evidence that Jesus' mission was one of reconciliation.
2. Tell briefly of man's estrangement from God.
3. How did man show that he was not God's friend?
4. What estranged man from his Creator?
5. What has been man's relationship to God since this separation?
6. In terms of this relationship what did Jesus come to do?
7. When we understand Jesus' mission as one of reconciliation what will we expect Christianity to change?
8. What is the final test of friendship?
9. What is the basic difference between an enemy and a friend?
10. How did Abraham show himself to be a friend of God?
11. What might be a good test of our reconciliation?
12. Quote Jesus' test of friendship.
13. What does the Greek word most commonly translated "repentance" in the New Testament mean?
14. What is the mind of the flesh?
15. Show that Eve was following the mind of the flesh.
16. Show how man's continuing to follow the mind of the flesh will keep him away from reconciliation.
17. How did Paul describe such people to the Philippians?
18. What difficulty did Paul point out to the Ephesians that existed among the Gentiles?
19. What did Paul tell the Colossians had been their trouble?
20. How did Jesus briefly describe the change that would bring about reconciliation?
21. Describe the change of mind that is indicated by the word "repentance."
22. What will always accompany repentance?
23. Describe the fruits of repentance.

LESSON 10

JESUS CAME TO BE A PROPITIATION

Having considered Jesus' mission from the standpoint of reconciliation, we shall view it next as a propitiation. This study is in reality a continuation of the preceding one. Without the propitiation there could be no reconciliation.

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (I John 4:10). "And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world" (I John 2:2). "Whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood, to show his righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God" (Rom. 3:25). These statements make evident the fact given in the topic above. Jesus came to be the sin offering, the propitiation for sin, the "lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Since God has expressed his ideas and teachings in terms of human relationships and experiences, let us review the human experience in terms of which this lesson is taught.

Suppose we say that you and I were friends but I did that which offended you and which I have come to recognize as an offense. The offense was of such a nature that it has disrupted our friendship. We are estranged from each other. Our association with each other is no longer pleasing and helpful, but is irritating and undesirable.

Our attitudes toward each other are no longer considerate and forgiving, but have become harsh and condemning. We have become enemies. Before we can return to our former relationship as friends there must be a reconciliation. In order that there be a reconciliation, that which has come between us must be removed. The effect of my wrong upon you and upon your attitude, the effect of my wrong upon me and upon my attitude must be removed or else we can never fully return to those bonds of friendship that we enjoyed formerly. In the natural course of human events since I did you wrong I should make atonement for the wrong which I have done.

This is a propitiation. Let us bear in mind that whatever gift or offering, whether in material form, apology, or what not, that which will adjust the matters between us, remove the difficulty, restore our friendship, is a propitiation. To be a full propitiation, however, it must adjust the matter with both of us. As the matter stands, you know that I have wronged you and my conscience will not allow me to forget that I have wronged you. Suppose that the offering which I bring to you is that which makes full atonement and restores to you the happy attitude toward me which we had formerly, but for some reason it does not satisfy my conscience. It is not a satisfactory propitiation. On the other hand, suppose that which I offer to you sets my conscience at ease completely and restores with me the former attitude of friendship, but does not return me to my former place in your favor, the propitiation is insufficient.

Now in the case of man with God, as has already been

shown, man's offense was the cause of the separation and all men have continued in offense as Paul declared, "For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Before man can come back to God in that close relationship which he had at the beginning, he must be made to realize that he has sinned, for this is the starting point of reconciliation. As we have already seen, Jesus came to reconcile man unto God and thus restore the relationship which man had broken. Having been thus convicted that he is the guilty party and that he has sinned against his Creator and Maker, man is in need of an offering or a propitiation. It must be such that man can be confident that it will please God and also in its sufficiency it must satisfy man's conscience and thus remove his feeling of guilt. Man had no such offering so Jesus came as the propitiation.

We may better understand Jesus as a propitiation or offering for sin by considering some statements of comparison made in the Hebrew letter between our sacrifice and those which were offered under the law. In referring to the offerings under the law with respect to their efficacy with God, they were not sufficient. "Saying above, Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein (the which are offered according to the law), then hath he said, Lo, I am come to do thy will. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second" (Heb. 10:8-9). Its failure on man's part to cleanse his conscience is set forth in this statement, "According to which are offered both gifts and sacrifices that cannot, as touching the con-

science, make the worshipper perfect, being only (with meats and drinks and divers washings) carnal ordinances, imposed until a time of reformation" (Heb. 9:9-10). Then it is clear that the offerings under the law did not serve either purpose required of a propitiation. They did not please God, neither did they cleanse man's conscience. The writer goes on to show that the blood of Christ is sufficient to cleanse man's conscience, "For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled, sanctify unto the cleanness of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb. 9:13-14). John shows that Christ's blood also has the power to cleanse us from sin. "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). Therefore, Christ as a propitiation serves both needs. It satisfies God by cleansing man from sin and satisfies man by cleansing his conscience.

One might ask the question: How does the blood of Christ take away man's sins, and cleanse his conscience? The blood of Christ was shed nearly 2000 years ago and does not exist as such today, how can it be made to cleanse my soul and my conscience? Paul gave the basic answer to this question in these words, "Whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood" (Rom. 3:25). It is true that the blood of Christ has never touched my soul or my conscience nor that

of any other man, but to those who fully believe in Jesus and accept his offering, the shedding of his blood as his propitiation, he has the full forgiveness of sin and all sense of guilt is removed from his conscience. "Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). Thus only faith can do that which is to be done. Only faith can give reality to the propitiation. The full meaning of the statement will be discussed in the study of faith which will come at a later date.

Another point which should receive consideration here is that the power of the blood of Christ to cleanse one's conscience is limited. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb. 9:14). Here we find that the blood of Christ will cleanse one's conscience from "dead works." That is, through faith in the blood of Christ, one's conscience will be cleansed from the evil works which he has made dead unto himself, those deeds which he has ceased to practice, which he has turned away from, which he has set his heart not to repeat, those indulgences that have lost their enticing influence and have come to be seen not only as non-productive of good but antagonistic to one's real objectives and purposes in life. So long as a man continues to practice the act for which he has a feeling of guilt, so long will his feeling of guilt remain. No right thinking individual can sincerely conceive in his heart the forgiveness for a practice which is still living with him and in which he is still indulging.

This statement should re-emphasize the fact that man must separate himself from those practices for which he seeks forgiveness and from which he would have his conscience cleansed.

One might ask the questions: Why be disturbed about the conscience if one's sins are forgiven? Is it necessary that one's conscience be cleansed? John answered these questions for us in these words, "Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before him: because if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, we have boldness toward God; and whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight" (I John 3:19-22). In the first part of this statement from John the lesson seems to be this: If the manner of one's life is such that he stands condemned by his own heart or conscience on what he knows or recognizes as failure within himself, if our heart condemns us as not being of the truth, God who is greater than our heart and who knoweth all things will certainly do no less. If our heart condemn us, we cannot have boldness toward God to approach him in full faith to make known our requests, because we know that we have no real claim to that friendship with him which would give us confidence. When we know that we are not living in such a way as to please him, and continue living that way, we certainly have little ground for laying claim to his blessings, or little hope to draw us on to live energetically the Christian life.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON 10

1. In terms of what has God expressed his teaching?
2. In case of an estrangement between two people what is necessary in order to effect a reconciliation?
3. What must be accomplished by a propitiation in order for it to be satisfactory?
4. As a propitiation what was Jesus to accomplish?
5. Show from the Hebrew letter that the offerings under the law were not effective or sufficient for either God or man.
6. Show from Bible statements that Christ was a satisfactory propitiation both with God and man.
7. How does the blood of Christ cleanse one's conscience and also one's soul?
8. Under what condition does the blood of Christ cleanse one's conscience?
9. Why is it necessary that one's conscience be cleansed?

PART III
JESUS' METHOD

As followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we should not only be interested in understanding his mission because we have accepted the same work to carry on; but being confident of his wisdom, we should be assured that he used the best method by which to accomplish his work. His method is God's method; and since the work must be accomplished by God working through us, it is probably just as important for us to know and employ the right method as for us to have a clear conception of the mission or work which we should accomplish. Since this topic is of such great importance, and since it is one over which there has been much disagreement among religious people; it demands a very careful and detailed discussion.

LESSON 11

A PREACHING PLAN

When the time was come for God to fulfill his promise to Abraham and he was ready to send his Son into the world in fulfillment of that which was indicated through the prophets, he sent one before him to prepare the way for him whose name was John, and who later became commonly known as John the Baptist. "And in those days cometh John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, saying, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:1-2). "And he (John) came into all the region round about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins" (Luke 3:3). These two simple statements of John's mission also indicate to us his method. He came preaching. A careful study of the life and work of John the Baptist does not show that he used any other method in accomplishing his task of turning the people away from their sins and preparing them for Jesus' coming. John came preaching.

After Jesus had been baptized in the river Jordan, and had been tempted of Satan in the wilderness, he returned to the Jordan where John was baptizing. After Jesus had been announced to the people, he began his work which he came to do and the record is replete with statements which describe the method which he employed. "From that time began Jesus to preach, and to say, Repent ye;

for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). "And Jesus went about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness among the people" (Matt. 4:23). "And Jesus went about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of diseases and all manner of sickness" (Matt. 9:35).

Of a time early in his ministry, we are given this record, "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And he opened the book, and found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor: He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down: and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, Today hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4: 16-21). Here Jesus makes it unmistakably clear that Isaiah was speaking of him and the prophecy tells us that he was anointed to preach, that he was sent to proclaim. After being rejected in Nazareth, Jesus went to Capernaum and there he spent a busy day teaching in the synagogue,

and healing them that were sick and them that were possessed with demons.

“And in the morning, a great while before day, he rose up and went out, and departed into a desert place, and there prayed. And Simon and they that were with him followed after him; and they found, him and say unto him, All are seeking thee. And he saith unto them, Let us go elsewhere into the next towns, that I may preach there also; for to this end came I forth. And he went into the synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out demons” (Mark 1:35-39). “And when it was day, he came out and went into a desert place: and the multitudes sought after him, and came unto him, and would have stayed him, that he should not go from them. But he said unto them, I must preach the good tidings of the kingdom of God to the other cities also: for therefore was I sent” (Luke 4:42-43). When Jesus had finished his personal ministry and was being tried by the Roman authorities, “Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice” (John 18:37). Thus Jesus said that he was sent to preach, that he came forth to preach, that he came into the world to bear witness unto the truth. The record of his life leaves no doubt that he did what he came to do; he preached in the homes, by the seaside, on the mountains, in the desert, in the synagogue, in the temple, wherever he went he was preaching, teaching and healing. In view of all this, cer-

tainly there could be no doubt that Jesus was to accomplish his work by preaching.

Not only did Jesus use the preaching method, but he passed it along to those who were to assist him in his work. From the large body of disciples which he had gathered about him, we are told, "And he appointed twelve, that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach" (Mark 3:14). After these were appointed, Matthew tells us, "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and charged them, saying, Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons: freely ye received, freely give" (Matt. 10:5-8). Later Jesus sent out others of which we have this record, "Now after these things the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself was about to come" (Luke 10:1). And in the instructions which were given unto them we find this statement, "And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you: and heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you" (Luke 10:8-9).

After Jesus had completed his personal ministry, just before he was to ascend to the Father, he met those whom he had prepared to send forth as apostles to carry the message of life and gave to them the final commission under which they served. Of it we have two records. They

are both printed here for the purpose of emphasis. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16). "And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:18-20). And thus in Jesus' final world-wide commission he tells the apostles how to accomplish the work whereunto he had sent them. Go and preach the gospel, go and make disciples, teaching them. It is evident that he had set the example, and, in this as in all other things, it was to be followed. As a part of the record left to us of Jesus' last meeting with the apostles in the city of Jerusalem, just before he went out to the Mount of the Olives where he ascended unto the Father; we are told, "Then opened he their mind, that they might understand the scriptures; and he said unto them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 24:45-47). And thus in this summary statement in describing the work that they should do he said that repentance and remission of sins should be preached unto all of the nations.

After all of this teaching by precept and example, and

all of the training which was given to the twelve, certainly no one is surprised that when the apostles received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, they immediately began to preach and to teach. Ever after, they pursued that same task despite all opposition. This teaching was received with such a conviction by the apostles that when Peter and John were charged by the council not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus they answered, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard" (Acts 4:19-20). And later when the twelve apostles were arrested and brought before the council they were reminded that they had been charged not to teach in this name, but they answered, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). After they were beaten by the council and threatened, we are told, "And every day, in the temple and at home, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5:42).

We also find the same zeal for preaching among the disciples, other than the twelve apostles. Of Stephen it was said, "And they were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake" (Acts 6:10). When they were scattered throughout Judaea and Samaria, we are told, "They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word. And Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and proclaimed unto them the Christ" (Acts 8:4-5). Later when Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch were brought together by divine guidance we are told, "And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this scripture, preached unto him Jesus" (Acts 8:35). And

after the eunuch was converted and went on his way rejoicing, we are told, "But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached the gospel to all the cities, till he came to Caesarea" (Acts 8:40).

When the apostle Paul was arraigned before king Agrippa, in relating to him the case of his own conversion while on the way to Damascus, he described the work he was to do in these words, "For to this end have I appeared unto thee; to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me" (Acts 26:16-18). Later in writing to Timothy about his work Paul said, "I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I speak the truth, I lie not), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth" (I Tim. 2:7). "Whereunto I was appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher" (II Tim. 1:11).

Throughout Paul's life of persecution and hardship, he was always faithful to this commission. On his various missionary journeys, in company with many others, wherever he was, he was preaching and teaching. In writing to the Corinthian people, Paul emphasized the nature of the work which he was to do in this statement, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not in wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made void" (I Cor. 1:17). Paul did not mean by this statement

that he did not baptize for, in the two preceding verses he named those whom he had personally baptized. Paul was simply attempting to get them to see the whole matter in its true perspective. People are not saved by merely being baptized. Paul was not sent simply to baptize people, but to preach to them and turn them away from their sins, from themselves unto God, that they might do all those things that are pleasing to God.

God grant that those who preach the gospel may learn to place the emphasis where God placed it. May they place it on preaching his word that people may be turned from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may die to their sins; that they may turn from their old way of living; that they may leave their selfishness and greed and be prepared to accept Jesus as their propitiation, being baptized into his death and raised to walk in newness of life. May the preacher's pride cease to be in the number of people whom he has baptized, for in many cases that may not be a matter in which to rejoice. We find that Paul thanked God that he baptized none of those Corinthians save Crispus and Gaius and the household of Stephanas, lest they in ignorance should claim that they were baptized into his name. (I Cor. 1:14-15) The preacher's rightful joy should not be measured by the number of people whom he has baptized, but by the number of people who are faithful in serving God day by day. In some cases I fear that preachers are somewhat like the old woman who insisted that she knew how to rear children, and pointed as evidence to the fact that she had had a family

of fourteen. However, when she was questioned about her family she revealed the fact that nine of the fourteen died in infancy. A very serious question that might be asked many preachers is: How many of those people whom you have baptized are living “unto Him who for their sakes died and rose again”? Or how many have not been properly taught, have not come under the real influence of the teaching, but are living lives that have disgraced the name they have confessed and in which they have been baptized?

Yes, Paul was sent to preach, he did preach, and in his discussion with the Corinthian people, he gave us the reason why he preached and the reason why we should preach. “For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God’s good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe” (I Cor. 1:21). To the Roman people through a series of questions, he showed how this was to be accomplished. After quoting from Joel, “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. 10:13) he asked, “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Rom. 10:14). Preaching or teaching is the only method and means whereby man may be saved. God’s plan is a preaching or teaching plan. It is not a baptizing plan. The truth must be preached. Only the truth can set people free. (John 8:32) And until they have been turned away from their sins through the power of the

truth, baptism is worthless. It has no meaning. It has no place. On the other hand, when one is fully taught the truth and believes the truth he will accept the truth; and he will accept as part of the truth the teaching on baptism.

God's plan is not only not a baptizing plan but it is not a singing plan. Singing has its place in the worship of God. It serves the purpose for which it was given. It is our privilege and should be our joy to sing his praises. In singing, if we use the songs that we should, we can teach and admonish one another. But song service was never designated as the plan by which people were to be saved. It may on some occasions be used to get people into a more meditative frame of mind. It may serve to stimulate one's emotional nature. An invitation song does mark a definite time at which one is called upon to make a decision. On the other hand, care should be taken that the emotional appeal of the song and the stirring plea of the preacher are not more powerful factors in moving one to confess Christ and to be baptized, than those great truths presented in God's word. In fact, there is not a case on record or a statement in the whole New Testament teaching that gives any indication that songs were ever used in the New Testament days in conjunction with the invitation of Christ. These statements should not be construed to mean that the writer considers it wrong to use an invitation song. They are made rather to warn us all that we cannot sing people into the kingdom of God. That God's plan is not a singing plan, but a preaching plan. If we would

save people, we must preach to them or teach them.

Not only is God's plan not a baptizing plan and not a singing plan, but it is also not a praying plan. Prayer, like baptism and like singing, has its place in God's plan, has its purpose to fulfill; but that purpose is not to save. When John the Baptist began to prepare the people for Jesus, he did not propose to pray their sins away. He did not propose to turn them away from their sins by praying for them, but his method was preaching. Likewise, when Jesus began his ministry, he did not propose to accomplish it by praying but by preaching. Not that Jesus did not pray, for he prayed frequently and he prayed much; but that was not the method by which he proposed to turn man away from his sins. In fact, we have no record of any prayer where Jesus prays that a sinner might accept him, or where he prays that God might lengthen out the brittle thread of life until he could come to the knowledge of the truth. Neither do we have a record of any such prayer by the apostles or early disciples. We cannot hope to pray our friends or our loved ones into the proper relationship with God any more than we can hope to pray them out of purgatory. This is simply not God's way. He proposes to save man through "the foolishness of preaching." In that lies our only hope.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON 11

1. By what method did John the Baptist accomplish his work?
2. Give evidence that Jesus employed the preaching method.
3. What prophetic endorsement of his work did Jesus point out at Nazareth?
4. Give evidences that Jesus was sent to preach.
5. On what occasions did Jesus say that he was sent to preach?
6. Name some of the places where Jesus preached.
7. On what limited commissions did Jesus send disciples to preach?
8. Quote statements of the world wide commission and tell the conditions under which they were made.
9. Tell how and under what conditions the apostles began their work.
10. Tell of some of the preaching done by other disciples.
11. Tell of Paul's commission.
12. What did Paul say he was not sent to do?
13. Where should those who preach the gospel place the emphasis and why?
14. In what should the preacher of the gospel find his joy rather than in the number of people whom he baptizes?
15. Through what was it God's good pleasure to save those who believe?
16. Show that God's plan is not a baptizing plan even though baptizing is a part of it.
17. Show that God's plan is not a singing plan though singing has its place.
18. Show that God's plan is not a praying plan by showing the place that prayer should fill.

LESSON 12

TAUGHT OF GOD

In the foregoing discussion, certainly it has been made plain that God's plan is a preaching plan. Despite this array of precepts and examples, there are still thousands who refuse to accept the idea. Probably the most frequent evidence offered to the contrary is Jesus' statement recorded in the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John. Let us give it a careful examination.

In speaking with the Jews, who had rejected him, Jesus said, "No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day" (John 6:44). This statement is absolutely correct. Had it not been our Saviour would never have made it. There is no other way by which a person could come to Jesus than to be drawn by the Father. There should be no reason nor desire on the part of any one to modify this statement or to ignore it. Jesus spake the truth. "No man can come to me except the Father that sent me draw him." Since there is no question as to the fact that Jesus made the statement; that it is valid; that there is no question about the translation of it from the Greek; it is evident that there is but one point of difference, and that is on the question of meaning.

What does Jesus' statement mean? How will the Father draw men unto the Lord Jesus Christ? Will

it be by some miraculous power or some mysterious influence of which Jesus tells us nothing in his teaching? Will it be by some vision, or special appearance, or a still small voice? Is this to be accomplished separate and apart from Jesus' teaching, the gospel, which is "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16)? If so, why did the Son of God come to earth and spend his life here in teaching and preaching; in training others to teach and preach that which he himself said would cause division, would lead to persecution, and which was to result in his crucifixion? Then after his resurrection from the dead, why did he commission the twelve to go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation? And why did the apostles continue their work of preaching and teaching, suffering persecution and finally death if it had no importance in the salvation of the souls of men? Why should the God of wisdom, of power, of love, and of mercy have his son spend his earthly existence and shed his blood upon the cross when it was doomed to fail in that which he came to accomplish? And why should God have Jesus teach the apostles and have them to teach others to do those things which they could not do or which would not save them even if they did?

But let us come back to our main issue, How does God draw man unto the Lord Jesus Christ? After declaring that, "No man can come to me except the Father that sent me draw him," Jesus quoted from the prophets as evidence to those Jews that his statement was true. Continuing our reading, "It is written in the prophets,

And they shall all be taught of God" (John 6:45). This statement carries us at least one step farther. God was to draw men to his Son by teaching. From Jesus' comment upon this quotation, "Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me" (John 6:45), it is evident that it would resemble the regular teaching process as we know it. We see from this statement that before anyone could come to him, he must hear and learn. He must apply his intelligence and understand.

What more are we told about God's method of teaching man? In the first of the Hebrew Letter we are told, "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions in the divers manners" (Heb. 1:1). Here we learn that God had spoken unto the fathers, that he had taught them in the prophets, that this had been his way of teaching the Jews. The apostle Paul in speaking of the Jewish people, including himself, said, "So that the law is become our tutor to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 3:24). Thus we see that the prophets were not the real teachers, but that the law which had come from God was the tutor, or according to the King James version, "the schoolmaster." The law through its instruction was the pedagogue that brought them to Christ. The prophets were simply the agents through whom God was teaching. Thus Peter declared, "For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Peter 1:21). And Paul introduced his quotation from Isaiah with the words,

“Well spake the Holy Spirit through Isaiah the prophet unto your fathers” (Acts 28:25). Hence, it is clear that God through the Holy Spirit by the prophets had provided a teaching to those of the Jews who would hear him that would lead them to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now with this before us, we go back to give further examination to Jesus' statements that, “No one can come to me except the Father that sent me draw him,” and that “they shall all be taught of God.” To whom were these statements made and under what conditions? Jesus had proclaimed to the Jews that he was the bread of life, the true bread that came down out of heaven. But they had refused his teaching. They were murmuring because he had claimed to be the bread of life. They had refused him as the Son of God and declared him to be only the son of Joseph and Mary. So, “Jesus answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me” (John 6:43-45). Since the Jews had not heard God's teaching through the prophets, had not allowed those teachings to lead them to the Lord Jesus Christ, Jesus is making it plain to them that they need not murmur as long as they refuse that teaching which came from God, there was nothing else that could draw them to him. “For if ye believed Moses, ye would believe me; for he wrote

of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (John 5:46-47)

As they beheld Jesus, he appeared as a man and there was no man that knew him to be different except the one who had received God's teaching. There was no human testimony or human evidence that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God. As Jesus stated, "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: and no one knoweth who the Son is, save the Father; and who the Father is, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him" (Luke 10:22). It is evident from these statements that it was absolutely necessary that they be taught of God if they were going to know and come to Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God. For there was no one else who knew him, there was no one else to teach. Jesus made it clear in his statement to the apostles after his resurrection from the dead that not just the law in the limited sense, but the Jewish teaching as a whole including all divisions taught of him. "And he said unto them, These are my words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning me" (Luke 24:44). Paul bore witness to the completeness of the Jewish teaching before Agrippa when he said, "Having therefore obtained the help that is from God, I stand unto this day testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come; how that the Christ must suffer, and how that he first by the resurrection of the dead should proclaim

light both to the people and to the Gentiles" (Acts 26:22-23). Since God was the only source outside of Jesus himself, that knew that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, it was not necessary that he teach the Jews this but he must also teach the Gentiles. It was not only necessary that he teach the people before Christ's day but that he teach those that lived since Christ's day.

So our next question is: How does God teach people today? How does he lead them to the Lord Jesus Christ? No one can come to Christ except the Father draw him. We now return to the first of the book of Hebrews for the complete statement of how God has taught and is teaching to draw people to the Lord Jesus Christ. "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds" (Heb. 1:1-2). It is clear from this statement that God's agency for teaching man has changed. No longer is he teaching man through the prophets with their dreams and visions, but through his Son, who is the embodiment of God's own nature. He who gave evidence that the teaching which he taught was God's teaching by accompanying it with signs and miracles, Also in Jesus' teaching he declared this fact frequently. To the Jews who had rejected him Jesus said, "I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you: howbeit he that sent me is true; and the things which I heard from him, these speak I unto the world. They perceived not that he spake to them of the Father. Jesus therefore said, When

ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he and that I do nothing of myself, but as the Father taught me, I speak these things" (John 8:26-28). On another occasion, "And Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that beholdeth me beholdeth him that sent me" (John 12:44-45). And again, "For I spake not from myself; but the Father that sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life eternal; the things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto me, so I speak" (John 12:49-50). To the disciples he said, "If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also: from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it suffieth us. Jesus said unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth his works" (John 14:7-10). And also, "He that loveth me not keepeth not my words: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me" (John 14:24). In his prayer in behalf of his disciples that he offered on the night of his betrayal, he said, "Now they know that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are from thee: for the words which thou gavest me I have given unto them; and they received

them, and knew of a truth that I came forth from thee, and they believed that thou didst send me" (John 17:7-8). In sending forth the twelve on the limited commission Jesus said unto them, "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me" (Matt. 10:40). In sending forth the seventy Jesus said, "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that rejecteth you rejecteth me; and he that rejecteth me rejecteth him that sent me" (Luke 10:16).

All of these statements are in keeping with the prophecy which was spoken by Isaiah and quoted to Joseph by an angel of the Lord before Jesus was born. "Now all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, And they shall call his name Immanuel; which is, being interpreted, God with us" (Matt. 1:22-23). We see by this that the name Immanuel, by which Jesus was called was interpreted "God with us." This agrees with Paul's statement, "But all things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:18-19). Thus to hear Jesus' teaching is to be taught of God. When one has heard and learned, he may recognize his need, comprehend Jesus' great promises, and come to him.

If these materials have been properly presented, it is evident that Jesus' teaching to the Jews, "No man can

come to me, **except** the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me" (John 6:44-45), is in perfect accord with Hebrews 1:1-2, and also with Paul's statement to the people at Rome. "For, Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:13-14). The reasoning given in Paul's statement forces anyone who will listen to the conclusion that the starting point of man's salvation is with the preacher, or better, the study of the Bible. He must be taught, must learn of God, that he may come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

One might ask the question: Then why did not Jesus use this same sort of simple direct teaching when he was talking to the Jews? Why did he use those terms that so many people have misunderstood? This question might be asked about many of the statements which Jesus made to the Jews. Why did Jesus say to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5)? And why did Jesus say to the Jews, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves" (John 6:53)? This statement was not only misunderstood but "Upon this many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him" (John 6:66). Why did he speak

to the multitudes in parables, many of which not even the disciples understood? To this question Jesus gave us the answer, for it was asked by the disciples. "And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?" (Matt. 13:10). "Therefore speak I to them in parables; because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And unto them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall in no wise understand; And seeing ye shall see, and shall in no wise perceive" (Matt. 13:13-14). The people were satisfied. They did not want to hear. They wanted to continue in their own way. So just as God had allowed Adam, in the beginning, to select his own course, Jesus left those of his day who had perverted God's teaching who were self-satisfied, who were so self-confident that they would not be aroused to a sincere effort to understand, to continue in their own way. But those who sought the truth learned the truth.

This was not only true of Jesus' teaching during his personal ministry, it is also true today. There are many teachings of the New Testament that people have not come to understand, because they have not opened their hearts to receive the truth; because they have not been willing to turn away from their own selfish thinking, their preconceived ideas; because they are blinded by their own selfish desires and interests. Jesus' teaching is a spiritual teaching and one must become spiritual to understand it. Much of it is stated in such a way that the spiritually minded person may understand and

follow the truth; but the carnally minded person may not understand, may misunderstand, and may remain completely satisfied with his misunderstanding.

All these things have not been said in answer to our question with which we began, but to prepare us to hear the answer. Jesus gave the answer. What is it? "But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who it was that should betray him. And he said, For this cause have I said unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it be given unto him of the Father" (John 6:64-65). So we see that Jesus' reason for making this statement to the Jews, as well as many other dark sayings, was the same as that for speaking to them in parables. They did not believe God's teaching concerning Jesus and were seeking to accuse him rather than to learn.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON 12

1. How only can people come to Jesus?
2. From the standpoint of human reasoning why is it unreasonable to believe that man can be saved in some way apart from the gospel?
3. By what process was God to draw man to Jesus?
4. What suggests that it is to happen through the normal use of human intelligence?
5. Show from the scripture that God taught the Jews through the prophets.
6. Show also that the teaching of the prophets was in reality the work of the Holy Spirit.
7. Describe the conditions under which Jesus said, "No man can come to me except the Father that sent me draw him," and state its apparent purpose.
8. Who alone knew that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, and what necessary inference follows?
9. Give scriptural evidence of the completeness of the teaching given to the Jews.
10. Show carefully that God teaches us today through his Son.
11. Give other statements that Jesus made that were not understood.
12. Why were such statements made?
13. Why had Jesus said, "No man can come unto me, except it be given unto him of the Father"?

LESSON 13

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CONVERSION

The teaching that one must receive the Holy Spirit before he can come to Christ, or must be led to Christ by the Holy Spirit apart from Jesus' teaching, or that one is converted by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit, has prevented many people from understanding God's plan as a preaching plan. This doctrine fits nicely into the erroneous interpretation of Jesus' statement, "No one can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him," which has already been examined. To those who have been thinking that way, this doctrine, of course, completes that idea by naming the power through which God would draw men to Jesus. By studying the teaching of the New Testament on the work of the Holy Spirit in conversion, we should be able to ascertain the truth or the falsity of this doctrine.

However, before taking up this question directly, the author wishes to remind the reader that he does not propose at this time to make an exhaustive study of the Holy Spirit but rather to present those materials that will be of aid in understanding the question before us. It appears in order also to observe that there are many conflicting ideas relative to the Holy Spirit. This should not be surprising. God has granted unto us only a very limited revelation on the subject. This leaves us in ig-

norance on many of the questions that men ask, providing a very fertile field for conjecture. Notwithstanding the fact that our revelation on the Holy Spirit is limited and many of our human questions cannot be authoritatively answered, the information provided relative to the work of the Holy Spirit in conversion appears to be altogether sufficient.

Our study should provide us with the answers to at least four questions. By what other names was the Holy Spirit called? To whom was the Holy Spirit promised? What was to be the work of the Holy Spirit? How did the Holy Spirit accomplish this work?

In what is known as Jesus' farewell discourse to the apostles, which was given between the time of the Passover supper and that of his prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus said, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16-17). In referring to it a little later in the same discourse he said, "But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name" (John 14:26). From these expressions of Jesus it is clear that the Holy Spirit was called the Spirit of truth, and was also spoken of as the Comforter. So in using these terms, we shall understand that the Comforter, the Spirit of truth and the Holy Spirit were all one and the same. This answers our first question.

Bearing in mind the fact that this discourse was made to the apostles at night after eating the Passover, and referring to the statement quoted above, we see that

Jesus' promise to send the Holy Spirit was made to the apostles. Other expressions in the speech later reinforce the same idea. "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth" (John 15:26). "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 go, I will send him unto you" (John 16:7).

Shortly before Jesus' ascension he said, "And behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). "And, being assembled together with them, he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, said he, ye heard from me: for John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence" (Acts 1:4-5).

Since we have learned that the Holy Spirit was to be sent to the apostles our next question is: what was he to do for them and through them? Jesus did not leave them to guess about the matter and neither should it be necessary for us to guess. His first statement of the work of the Spirit is given in these words, "But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you" (John 14:26). Another descriptive statement of the work of the Spirit made later was, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall

hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come" (John 16:13). Thus, the work of the Holy Spirit was to better qualify them as teachers by teaching them, by bringing to their remembrance what Jesus had taught them, by guiding them into all the truth. Jesus made another statement in which he expressed the work of the Spirit. "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me: and ye also bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning" (John 15:26-27). Here we are told that the Spirit of truth, or the Holy Spirit, was to bear witness and the apostles also were to bear witness. He said further, "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 go, I will send him unto you. And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye behold me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged" (John 16:7-11). From these statements it is clear that the work of the Holy Spirit was to aid those who had already obeyed God in teaching others to turn from their sins.

Now let us turn our attention to the question: how was the Holy Spirit to accomplish its work? Since it was especially promised to the apostles and since they were told that it was to be their guide into all the truth, of necessity we must study their work to learn of the work

of the Holy Spirit. In regard to their work, it seems reasonable that we should begin with their assignment.

Not long before the ascension Jesus told them to "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15) and, "Go ye therefore, and make disciples (or learners) of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). Luke's record gives the assignment in these words, "And he said unto them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. Ye are witnesses of these things" (Luke 24:46-48). But they were not ready to begin. They needed to wait for their guide. So Jesus added, "And behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). Another record of the same occasion says, "And, being assembled together with them, he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, said he, ye heard from me: for John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence" (Acts 1:4-5). And the very last statement made by Jesus to his apostles before he was received up was, "But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and

Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

We are told that they waited at Jerusalem for that which they had been promised and we are given the description of its coming in these words. "And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:1-4). There are some things about the coming of the Spirit described here that we may not understand but we should have no trouble understanding the facts that are stated in the last verse. It is interesting to note that in the same verse in which we are told they are filled with the Holy Spirit we are told that they began to speak. They were waiting for this power to guide them as witnesses. They had received it; they began immediately to bear witness or to teach the things concerning Jesus Christ. Another thing about the matter that is clear is that they spake as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Thus guided or controlled by the Spirit, undoubtedly they taught what should have been taught. When they were asked, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter answered them without hesitation and without question. Certainly Peter did not tell them the wrong thing to do nor did he tell them to do something that they could not do. What

was Peter's answer? "And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38). Did he say anything about the Holy Spirit? Yes. Did he tell them that there was nothing that they could do until they received the Holy Spirit? No. Did he tell them that they would receive the Holy Spirit? Yes. When would they receive it? After they had repented and been baptized into the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of their sins. In other words they were to receive it when they were prepared to receive it. Thus we see that the Holy Spirit guided the preacher in his preaching and when the people had believed his preaching they were told what to do that they might receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. They were not told to wait for the Holy Spirit, or to pray for the Holy Spirit, that they might be able to do those things which Peter had told them to do. Peter did not tell them to pray for the Holy Spirit that they might believe. They had already believed without the Holy Spirit. He did not tell them to pray for the Holy Spirit that they might have remission of sins, but to repent and be baptized unto the remission of sins.

Although Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit was to the apostles, we find that here in the very beginning of their work they tell the people that they shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Thus it is evident that others besides apostles received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Since on occasions, the expression "gift of the Holy Spirit" has been interpreted as not meaning a portion of

the Holy Spirit itself but something that was provided by the Holy Spirit you are asked to consider the following statements. "And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him" (Acts 5:32). "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believed on him were to receive: for the Spirit was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:38-39). "And hope putteth not to shame; because the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us" (Rom. 5:5). "Therefore he that rejecteth, rejecteth not man, but God, who giveth his Holy Spirit unto you" (I Thess. 4:8). "For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit" (Heb. 6:4). These statements make it unmistakably clear that those who believe, those who obey, would receive a portion of the Holy Spirit as a gift. This fact is in keeping with Joel's prophecy as quoted by Peter on the day of Pentecost. "And it shall be in the last days, saith God, I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh: And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, And your young men shall see visions, And your old men shall dream dreams: Yea and on my servants and on my handmaidens in those days Will I pour forth of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in the heaven above, And signs on the earth beneath; Blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the day of the

Lord come, That great and notable day: And it shall be, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:17-21).

We shall not concern ourselves here with comparing the baptism of the Holy Spirit received by the apostles and the gift of the Holy Spirit received by others. Both received the Holy Spirit. We shall make it our task to follow carefully the record of conversions under the work of the apostles guided by the Holy Spirit that we may be sure that our answer is in keeping with the divine record.

From Pentecost forward despite the threats and persecution of the Jews, the apostles and others who became believers preached and taught people what to do, but never did they teach them to pray for the Holy Spirit, nor to wait for the Holy Spirit to come and guide them in what they were to do; for the Holy Spirit's part was to guide the apostles who taught them and their teaching was to tell them what to do. When Peter preached in Solomon's porch, he taught the people of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and admonished them, "Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; and that he may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus" (Acts 3:19-20). Not one word did he say to them about seeking the Holy Spirit that they might be saved. In regard to Philip's preaching in Samaria we are told, "But when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8:12). The record

does not indicate that Philip had told them anything whatever about the Holy Spirit. They had heard Philip's preaching, believed Philip's preaching and were baptized.

"Now when the apostles that were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit: for as yet it was fallen upon none of them: only they had been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:14-17). Here it is unmistakably clear that the people had received the word of God and had been baptized but had not received the Holy Spirit. Certainly Philip would not have taught these people to do the wrong thing and surely Peter and John would not have endorsed the wrong thing by bestowing the Holy Spirit upon them.

On Paul's third missionary journey he found twelve men in Ephesus to whom he put the question, "Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed? And they said unto him, Nay, we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Spirit was given. And he said, Into what then were ye baptized? And they said, Into John's baptism. And Paul said, John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him that should come after him, that is, on Jesus. And when they heard this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied" (Acts 19:2-6). Here is a case

when the apostle Paul, who did not receive his teaching from the other apostles nor with the other apostles but directly from Jesus himself (Gal. 1:12), dealt with this case after the exact statement of Peter on the day of Pentecost. Peter said, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Paul saw that these men were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus for the remission of their sins then he laid his hands upon them and they received the Holy Spirit. Surely Paul would not have delayed this gift had it been needed in advance of baptism. Not only is that true but Paul's words and actions on this occasion very strongly imply that the term "believe" when applied broadly included baptism. Paul asked if they received the Holy Spirit when they believed (Acts 19:2) but did not bestow it upon them until after they were baptized. This certainly suggests that a believer is one who has complied with that form of doctrine (baptism) as evidence that he believes. This also agrees with the statement of the apostles when they were on trial before the council, "And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him" (Acts 5:32).

QUESTIONS ON LESSON 13

1. Why do we have many conflicting ideas about the Holy Spirit?
2. What are some of the other names by which the Holy Spirit was called?
3. To whom did Jesus promise the Holy Spirit?
4. Give statements that show where the apostles were to be when they received the Holy Spirit.
5. What was the Holy Spirit to do for and through the apostles?
6. Why must we study the work of the apostles to learn of the work of the Holy Spirit?
7. Give the statements describing the work that the apostles were to do.
8. Tell how the work of the apostles was begun.
9. When Peter began to preach under the influence of the Spirit just what did he tell the people to do?
10. In telling the people what to do what did he tell them about the Holy Spirit?
11. Who were to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit?
12. What was the gift of the Holy Spirit?
13. What did the apostles and other teachers never teach the people to do about the Holy Spirit?
14. What did Peter tell the people in Solomon's porch to do about the Holy Spirit?
15. What did Philip tell the people of Samaria about the Holy Spirit?
16. What happened to show that the apostles endorsed what Philip did in Samaria?
17. Show how Paul dealt with a case at Ephesus after the exact statement of Peter on the day of Pentecost.
18. By the way Paul dealt with this case at Ephesus what seems to have been included in his term "believe"?
19. What statements from the other apostles is this in agreement with?

LESSON 14
THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CONVERSION
Continued

After Saul of Tarsus had seen his vision on the way to Damascus, and had spent three days without sight and without food or drink, and was praying to God, we are told, "And Ananias departed, and entered into the house; and laying his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way which thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit. And straightway there fell from his eyes as it were scales, and he received his sight; and he arose and was baptized; and he took food and was strengthened" (Acts 9:17-19). We see that Ananias did not ask Saul if he had been praying for the Holy Spirit, and did not instruct him to pray for the Holy Spirit; but told him that he had come that he might receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. We are told that he immediately, or straightway, received his sight. We are not told when he received the Holy Spirit. Some people believe that he received the Holy Spirit at the same time because Ananias laid his hands upon him. Since the apostles, on different occasions, bestowed the Holy Spirit in that way, this may be correct; but if it is, it is the only case on record where anyone, save apostles, bestowed the Holy Spirit upon someone else.

In this connection, let us also examine the statement that the Lord made to Ananias in the vision before he sent him to Saul. "And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go to the street which called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one named Saul, a man of Tarsus: for behold, he prayeth; and he hath seen a man named Ananias coming in, and laying his hands on him, that he might receive his sight" (Acts 9:11-12). Here we are told of a vision Saul had had in which he had seen a man named Ananias laying his hands on him that he might receive his sight. He had not been shown that he would receive the Holy Spirit by Ananias laying his hands on him. So there is probably as much reason to believe that Saul was given the Holy Spirit directly from heaven after he had risen and was baptized as that he received it when Ananias laid his hands on him. We are not told when he received it, nor how. Could it not have come upon him, who had been divinely selected to be an apostle, as it did upon the other apostles, and consequently was not a part of his conversion? Or could not Ananias have laid his hands on him after his baptism as Saul, or Paul, did in the case of the twelve Ephesians discussed above?

But regardless of whether he received the Holy Spirit before or after he was baptized, it did not interfere with Saul's doing just what the people on the day of Pentecost were told to do. This was made unquestionably clear by Paul when he related the story of his conversion to the mob in Jerusalem while he was standing on the stairs of the castle. In the first place, it is significant that he made no reference whatsoever to receiving the Holy Spirit. In

the second place, he made it clear that the act of baptism was a very essential part in what he was told to do, or in the instruction which was given to him by Ananias. He quoted Ananias, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name" (Acts 22:16). Thus he shows that he was cleansed from his sin in the same way as those people were on the day of Pentecost. Peter had told them, "Repent and be baptized unto the remission of your sins" (Acts 2:38). So whether we can be sure that Saul received the Holy Spirit before or after he was baptized, we can be sure that it made no change in what was necessary for him to do to have his sins forgiven.

In the case of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch it is clear that all direct ministration of divine power that we are told anything about served only to guide the preacher. "But an angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza: the same is desert" (Acts 8:26). "And the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran to him, and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?" (Acts 8:29-30). "And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this scripture, preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on the way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch saith, Behold, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" (Acts 8:35-36). "And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip; and the eunuch saw him no more, for he went on his way

rejoicing" (Acts 8:39). It is evident that the angel and the Spirit served the need of directing this preacher to this man who was worshiping God according to the law and also to separate them after the preacher's work was through; but that the eunuch was taught as man to man, that he understood, that he believed, that he was baptized.

In regard to the conversion of Lydia, we are given very few of the details. She was already a worshiper, no doubt, according to the law. Paul preached unto her with the other women, the Lord opened her heart, and she was baptized. (Acts 16:13-15) In Paul's journey before this time, we find that the Spirit had a part in directing him to the city of Philippi. (Acts 16:6-10) However, there is no indication that any divine manifestation of it played a part in Lydia's conversion. There is only one place that any question could be raised. That is in regard to the expression, "Whose heart the Lord opened to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul" (Acts 16:14). It seems altogether reasonable to consider that this expression simply means that through the power of the word which Paul spake she was caused to believe and accept the teaching. But whether this be the correct interpretation of this statement or not (and should one be disposed to grant that this was accomplished by some special power of the Spirit) it is still evident that such did not interfere with her doing what the people on the day of Pentecost did. Paul spake, she believed and was baptized.

When the Philippian jailer "called for lights and sprang in, and, trembling for fear, fell down before Paul and

Silas, and brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:29-30), Paul and Silas did not tell him to wait for the Holy Spirit, nor to pray for the Holy Spirit, nor that he would receive the Holy Spirit; but we are told, "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house" (Acts 16:31). But this man did not know the Lord Jesus. He probably had never heard of the Lord Jesus except through the prayers and songs of Paul and Silas that night while they were in the prison, so he was not prepared to believe. Simply telling a man to believe does not give him faith. So we are told, "And they spake the word of the Lord unto him, with all that were in his house" (Acts 16:32). It was necessary that this man be taught. As Paul later wrote, "So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). After hearing the word which Paul spake unto him he believed; and as is true with all sincere believers he followed the teaching which he believed. "And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, immediately" (Acts 16:33). In the account of this conversion there is no mention whatsoever made of the Spirit. The jailer heard, understood, and accepted the teaching that was offered to him by the apostle Paul.

The only other case of conversion which we have recorded in any detail is that of Cornelius. It has been left until the last because it is a most unusual case. It is most unusual because it is the first conversion among the Gentiles; and up until this time the apostles, who were all Jews, had not understood that they were to preach to the

Gentiles. Let us not forget as we examine this case that we are seeking to learn just what part was taken by the Holy Spirit. We learn first that Cornelius had a vision in which an angel appeared unto him and supplied him with certain information and instruction. "He saw in a vision openly, as it were about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in unto him, and saying to him, Cornelius" (Acts 10:3). The instruction was to send for a preacher. "And now send men to Joppa, and fetch one Simon, who is surnamed Peter" (Acts 10:5). Later we learn from the statement made by those whom he sent that Cornelius had been told, "To send for thee (Peter) into his house, and to hear words from thee" (Acts 10:22). After the preacher arrived, Cornelius said to him, "Now therefore we are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all things that have been commanded thee of the Lord" (Acts 10:33). These statements leave no room for doubt that the angel imparted no special gift to Cornelius, nor did he give him any reason to expect to receive the Holy Spirit through Peter, or any other such aid to supply his needs. He was expecting to be taught and when Peter arrived he was ready to listen. Thus far, we have seen that the angel imparted to Cornelius no special power, but informed him that he needed a preacher and where he could get one.

Our next point in question is: how did God prepare the preacher for the work which he was about to be called upon to do? Peter had never gone and preached to the Gentiles. He had never come to understand that he should. Up to this time he was restrained by the former

teaching of the Jews and still thought of the Jews as God's people and that no other people should have such privileges. So God sent him a vision in which he presented to him animals which according to the law were unclean. "And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common and unclean" (Acts 10:13-14). This showed that Peter was still following the old law in respect to clean and unclean animals just as he was with respect to Jews and Gentiles. "And a voice came unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, make not thou common" (Acts 10:15). It should be noted here that this lesson was taught in the form of a general principle and that it was stated three times, that it should not be forgotten (Acts 10:16). We are told that while Peter was perplexed over the meaning of this vision that the men who were sent by Cornelius stood before the gate and inquired for him. God knew Peter's perplexity. "And while Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. But arise, and get thee down, and go with them, nothing doubting: for I have sent them" (Acts 10:19-20). Peter went down and learned from the men of Cornelius' vision.

On the next day Peter accompanied the men to Caesarea to the house of Cornelius, but he carried with him six of the brethren (Acts 11:12). Peter knew that he was doing a strange thing and something for which he would have to answer to the Jews. He was still fully conscious of the strangeness of this case when he reached the house of Cornelius. So immediately upon entering and finding

the people come together, "And he said unto them, Ye yourselves know how it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to join himself or come unto one of another nation; and yet unto me hath God showed that I should not call any man common or unclean: wherefore also I came without gainsaying, when I was sent for" (Acts 10:28-29). The last statement which he made shows that he was still a little in question about the matter. Cornelius explained why he had sent for him by recounting his vision. Then he declared, "Now therefore we are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all things that have been commanded thee of the Lord" (Acts 10:33). To hear what, Cornelius? "All things that have been commanded thee of the Lord." Cornelius was not wanting Peter to do anything other than what had been commanded him, and certainly Peter could do no less.

So with this prompting, "And Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:34-35). After this general statement of introduction, which in itself would give the impression that Peter had come to recognize that the Gentiles were to be accepted, he began the main body of his speech with words which show that the teaching was sent first to the Jews. "The word which he sent unto the children of Israel, preaching good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all) . . ." (Acts 10:36). He continued his speech proclaiming the death, burial and resurrection of Christ that he had preached on the day of Pentecost, and on every other oc-

casation among the Jews of which we have any record. The way which Peter expressed the commission which was given unto the apostles suggests that he was still thinking of the Jews. He said, "And he charged us to preach unto the people" (Acts 10:42).

The term "people" up to this time was generally applied to the Jews. This was certainly the use of it in his preceding statement where Peter referred to Jesus' appearance after the resurrection. Peter continued his speech with the statement which certainly he had not understood up until now and it is very doubtful of his knowing the full significance of it even when he stated it at this time. "To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43). But something happened that was to give these words their true meaning. "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the word. And they of the circumcision that believed were amazed, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God" (Acts 10:44-46). On seeing all of this, all of Peter's doubt was removed which he declared by the question, "Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 10:47-48). Furthermore, when Peter made his defense before the Jews in Jerusalem on this question of going to the Gentiles, he declared, "And as I began to speak, the Holy

Spirit fell on them, even as on us at the beginning" (Acts 11:15). And, "If then God gave unto them the like gift as he did also unto us, when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I, that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11:17). Can anyone read these records carefully and doubt that the work of the Holy Spirit in this case of conversion was to guide the preacher? And even though in this case it was necessary for the purpose of guidance for the Holy Spirit to come upon these people before they completed their acceptance of the truth by baptism, it is evident that it did not take the place of baptism. Neither did it change that teaching which Cornelius declared that they were ready to hear. As Peter had preached in his first sermon, on Pentecost, "repent and be baptized unto the remission of sins" the same thing was necessary to these people. They were to show their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ the only way a man can show faith; that is, by doing the things that God teaches him to do.

The writer sincerely hopes that this review of the cases of conversions has made it clear that the work of the Holy Spirit in conversion in the days of the apostles was to guide the preacher, to guard the teaching, and not to operate upon the sinner to save him or to give him the power to see and accept the truth; that the work of the Holy Spirit was fully in harmony with the work of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. It came to guard and protect Jesus' plan as a preaching plan in such a way as to guarantee that the truth would be taught and that the record left for future generations would be correct. Since it was necessary in the days of the apostles for the sinner to

hear and learn the word of God, to believe it and obey it and that no supplemental irresistible power was sent to him to accomplish these things, why should people expect such today and why should they be taught to expect such? There should be no doubt that God's plan is a preaching plan. "For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1:21).

QUESTIONS ON LESSON 14

1. When Ananias was sent to Saul as he waited in Damascus what did he tell Saul about the Holy Spirit?
2. Is there anything in this case that does not agree with what Peter said to those on Pentecost about the Spirit?
3. What makes it appear doubtful that Saul received the Holy Spirit when Ananias laid his hands upon him and he received his sight?
4. What was Ananias told that Saul had seen in his vision of one coming to him?
5. What indication is there that Saul of Tarsus received the Spirit before he was baptized?
6. In Paul's speech on the stairs, what reference did he make to receiving the Holy Spirit at the time he was converted or as a part of his conversion?
7. What reference did he make to baptism as a part of his conversion?
8. What should this indicate as to the relative concern that we should have about the two?
9. Though we cannot be sure of some details of Saul receiving the Spirit of what can we be sure?
10. In the case of the conversion of the eunuch, what purpose was served by all direct ministration of divine power?
11. What evidence is there that the eunuch was taught anything about the Spirit as a special power?

12. What evidence is there that he was taught upon the subject of baptism?
13. What was Lydia taught about the Holy Spirit and what indication is there about the Spirit's part in her conversion?
14. Tell how the conversion of the jailor was brought about, making it clear just what part the Spirit had in the matter.
15. Why is the conversion of Cornelius a most unusual case?
16. Tell of Cornelius' vision, being careful to emphasize any manifestation or instruction relative to the Holy Spirit.
17. What did the vision prepare him to expect?
18. Tell of Peter's vision, making clear the influence or the work of the Holy Spirit.
19. What was the first thing Peter said to Cornelius upon arriving at his home?
20. What did Cornelius say that indicated what he expected of Peter or on this occasion?
21. Whom did Peter say was acceptable to God?
22. What was the real teaching of Peter's sermon?
23. What statement did Peter make that seems to indicate that he was still thinking of the Jews?
24. What great truth did Peter declare here which he probably has not understood up until this time?
25. While he was speaking who received the gift of the Holy Spirit?
26. When these people received the Holy Spirit what did they do that resembled the behaviour of the apostles when they received it on the day of Pentecost?
27. When questioned by the Jews at Jerusalem what point of comparison did Peter make between these receiving the Spirit and their receiving it?
28. What did Peter also say that suggests that this was a sign that he should accept the Gentiles?
29. What evidence is there that this coming of the Holy Spirit was not a necessary part of their conversion?
30. From this study what is evidently the work of the Holy Spirit in conversion and what is not its work?
31. In all of this we find evidence that God's plan for saving man is what kind of plan?

LESSON 15

SAVED BY GRACE

There is another doctrine that has caused confusion among religious people and has caused many to misunderstand God's plan as a preaching or teaching plan. It is Biblical in its wording but appears to be wholly human in origin. It is the doctrine that man has no active part in his salvation, but in helplessness must wait for the working of a mysterious power known as "the grace of God." Its acceptance should not be surprising since it conforms nicely with man's tendency to clothe religion in mystery and also provides the satisfaction of relieving man of any personal responsibility in the matter. In fact, it is so satisfying that many who deny it theoretically seem to accept it in practice. They show little interest in fulfilling any personal responsibility. In view of these influences it appears in order that we examine the Bible teaching on this subject.

The Bible plainly teaches that man is saved by the grace of God. Of this fact the following statements leave no room for doubt. "For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory" (Eph. 2: 8-9). "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and es-

tablish them in every good work and word" (II Thess. 2: 16-17). "That, being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:7). "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24). "But if it is by grace, it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace" (Rom. 11:6). With these plain statements before us surely there is no one who would deny or even question the teaching that man is saved by grace. Thus the Biblical wording is established. Our next question is: What is the Biblical meaning?

The word "grace" is our English word that was used to translate a Greek word. That same Greek word is also translated favor in the New Testament. "And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God" (Luke 1:30). "And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2: 52). It is also translated favor in Acts 2:47, 7:10, 24:27, 25:3 and 25:9. It is translated bounty. "And when I arrive, whomsoever ye shall approve, them will I send with letters to carry your bounty unto Jerusalem" (I Cor. 16:3). It is also translated benefit. "And in this confidence I was minded to come first unto you, that ye might have a second benefit" (II Cor. 1:15). The fact that this exact Greek word which is more commonly translated grace is also translated favor, bounty or benefit indicates that the word used by the New Testament writers that is translated grace in nowise implies the mysterious power that many have ascribed to it.

The word "grace" is defined by Webster as, "favor,

kindness, mercy, etc.” Since our Bible is a translated book, the word grace may be replaced by one of these other words without doing injustice to the meaning. Let us make the replacement in a few of the quotations used above to illustrate the effect. “By favor or kindness or mercy ye have been saved through faith.” “Who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through favor or kindness or mercy.” “Being justified by his favor or kindness or mercy.” These three cases are sufficient to illustrate the effect of using words for which we do not have some religious fixation. When we read the statement that man is saved by the mercy of God, or by the favor of God, or by the kindness of God, it is robbed of its implication of some mysterious power. It is unfortunate in this respect that the translators of the New Testament selected the word grace instead of a more commonly used English word for the translation of the idea. However, the variety of translations and the definition should make it clear that the word grace does not designate some mysterious power but the favor, kindness or mercy of God.

With this definition in mind let us now carefully examine the context in which we find the teaching that man is saved by grace. This definite statement is found only in the second chapter of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. “And you did he make alive, when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins, wherein ye once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the powers of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience; among whom we also all once

lived in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest:—but God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus: for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:1-10). This is a most unusually written paragraph. Verse eleven of this chapter and verse one of chapter three show that it is addressed to the Gentiles but it describes the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles. Through the use of second person pronouns, ye and you, Paul speaks directly to the Ephesians but through the parallel use of first person pronouns, we and us, he includes the Jews and thus shows that all were saved the same way.

Paul first points to the fact that God had made the Ephesians (Gentiles) alive from being “dead in their trespasses and sins,” then includes the Jews by stating that “all once lived in the lusts of the flesh . . . and were by nature children of wrath.” Wherein all had been dead without any claim on or merit of life, God had made them all alive together with Christ. Thus Paul is en-

couraging the Gentiles at Ephesus by teaching them that they have the same right to life as do the Jews and on the same basis.

In verse four Paul gives the explanation, "But God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us," and adds later "by grace have ye been saved." Here is man's only hope, this rich mercy as a result of the great love of God that was manifested in his grace or favor or kindness in offering unto him the way of life. Man in his sinfulness had nothing to offer so in God's mercy he had provided the offering. Jesus was the propitiation for sin (I John 4:10). From their sinful, dead condition God had raised them up with Christ. The reason for this is that God might show the exceeding riches of his grace, that God might show the greatness of his favor.

In verse eight Paul repeats the fact that they have been saved by grace, by the mercy and goodness of God; and that this salvation is not of themselves, it is the gift of God; that it is not accomplished through men's works that no man should glory. Thus God's plan for the salvation of man gives man no occasion to glory in himself but impels him to glory in God. Paul gave a similar description to the Corinthians in these words, "For behold your calling, brethren, that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put to shame the things that are strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised, did God choose, yea and the things that

are not, that he might bring to nought the things that are: that no flesh should glory before God. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (I Cor. 1:26-31). This is imperative both as a command and a need. Man must give God the glory without reservation; he must feel his dependence upon God and humble himself that his own nature may be able to serve him. Man must have no opportunity or reason for glorying in himself for this is his inclination. This is the very thing that separated him from his Maker in the beginning. Man exalted himself and disrespected God when he did that which was to make him as God to know good and evil (Gen. 3:4-5). Man must find in God's greatness and goodness that which naturally compels him to forget himself and to seek to honor God. This Paul further reinforces by his declaration, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

At this point may we digress from the discussion of our topic to be reminded of the personal nature of God's plan. May we come to understand that it is delicately adjusted to the need of human nature with an inherent power to control man and make him such as will please God if man will only be brought vitally into contact with it receiving it into his life and accepting its teaching as statements of reality. This can be accomplished only through most sincere personal application. Half-heartedness, indifference,

neglect are sure to prove fatal. Jesus taught, "Seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33) and the message was sent to the church at Laodicea, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:15-16).

In our examination of Paul's teaching on saved by grace two words, "through faith," have not been considered. The full statement is, "By grace have ye been saved through faith." This statement makes it evident that salvation by grace is accomplished through faith. A more complete statement of the matter is given in the Roman letter. "Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:1-2). So we see that through our Lord Jesus Christ we have our access into this grace by faith, that is, by faith in Christ as the Son of God we have our access or entrance into the grace of God. In other words, by faith in Christ we may receive the favor or mercy of God which is the forgiveness of our sins and the hope of eternal life. From this it is clear that Paul was not writing something new or different to the Ephesians but the same plan of salvation that he had preached at other places, the same that was preached by all the apostles and is briefly stated, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Furthermore, the fact that salvation by grace is through faith emphasizes Jesus' plan as a preaching plan rather than removing the need for preaching or teaching. Paul wrote, "So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17); and also, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:14). When the apostles and elders were gathered at Jerusalem to consider the question of circumcision of the Gentiles, "Peter rose up, and said unto them, Brethren, ye know that a good while ago God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel, and believe" (Acts 15:7). In Jesus' explanation of the parable of the sower he said, "And those by the way side are they that have heard; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word from their heart, that they may not believe and be saved" (Luke 8:12). Thus faith is by hearing. The Gentiles were to hear and believe, and the devil took away the word that they might not believe. Hence, faith does not come through some mysterious influence but through hearing God's word, and it is through faith that we have access to the grace of God (Rom. 5:2).

Now let us consider briefly Paul's writing to Titus. Paul wrote, "For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men" (Titus 2:11). In chapter three Paul describes the former sinful condition of himself and others in these words, "For we also once were foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in

malice and envy, hateful, hating one another" (Titus 3:3). Then he tells how they have been changed from a life of sinfulness to be made heirs of eternal life. "But when the kindness of God our Saviour, and his love toward man, appeared, not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:4-7). Here he speaks of that which appeared as the "kindness of God our Saviour, and his love toward man." Stating also that this was not according to the work that they had done that they had been saved but by his mercy, making it clear that man cannot earn his salvation as should be evident from the description of these sinful people before this change came. Thus we should all recognize that sinful man would continue to be bound by the habits of his sinful practices and continue in the same wicked course were it not for the appearing of the "kindness of God our Saviour, and his love toward man." And this appearance must be to each man individually. That is, each one must come to see and to know through faith in God's teaching the kindness and goodness of God or else he will continue in the way of his wickedness. There is no other influence under heaven to turn man away from his evil way.

Let us note also that Paul says that man's salvation is not only according to God's mercy but "through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit."

These phrases are certainly in agreement with that which happened in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus (Acts 22: 12-16) as Paul is including himself in the statement that he is making at this time. These phrases are also in complete agreement with Peter's instruction to the people on the day of Pentecost. After having shown them the kindness and the love of God in sending his Son whom they had crucified and slain; when these people believed, that is, when the kindness and love of God really appeared unto them they cried out, "What shall we do?" Evidently meaning, "What shall we do to be forgiven of our wickedness?" "And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Evidently baptism under these conditions was the washing of regeneration, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, the renewing of the Holy Spirit. As we have seen in a former lesson, this renewing of the Holy Spirit was to follow the washing of regeneration. It is man's part through the influence of God's word to be prepared in heart and life and submit himself to God's teaching, including the washing of regeneration with full confidence that God will provide the renewing of the Holy Spirit. In the apostles' day it seems to have been done in miraculous ways. Since that time, so far as revelation indicates, it appears to be accomplished through the power of the word of God. Thus the description that Paul gives in his letter to Titus which is closed with the statement, "Being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal

life" (verse 7) is a description of just what took place on the day of Pentecost and in all other cases of conversion. Thus we see how people come to be saved by the grace of God, the mercy of God, the kindness of God. The one outstanding difference between this description to Titus and the records of conversions as we have them is a difference necessitated by the difference in situations. In the conversion, the grace of God, or favor of God, is portrayed through the acts of his goodness that it may become effective in turning people away from their sinfulness and to accept the way of the Almighty; but in Paul's description to Titus as well as that to the Ephesians he is merely describing in words that which happened.

Before leaving the book of Titus, there is one other thing that should be called to attention. The major import of the book is to emphasize and bring about the teaching that was so much needed among the Cretans. Titus is admonished to be careful of his teaching that it be sound, and a system of teaching including that for the aged men and women, the younger men and women and also for the special class as servants is described. The reason for all this is expressed in these words, "For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world" (Titus 2:11-12). Here we find the method of God's plan spoken of as that which was done by the grace of God. Grace has come instructing or teaching those to whom it has truly appeared, teaching the very thing that had been taught by Jesus and his

apostles, showing us again that this expression, "the grace of God," is referring to his love, his kindness and his mercy provided through the Lord Jesus Christ. He was the gift of God, manifesting the love of God, and teaching man to turn away from his sin and live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.

Earlier in this discussion we have learned that it is through preaching or teaching that people come to recognize the favor of God through faith in his teaching and have access to the grace of God by which they are saved. This record makes it clear that preaching or teaching is not only necessary to bring people to the grace of God but continues to be important as a part of the working of the grace of God in instructing people that they be not carried away with the error of the wicked but grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (II Pet. 3:17-18), and that they receive not the Grace of God in vain (II Cor. 6:1). This was a part of Jesus' commission to his apostles, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you" (Matt. 28:20).

There is one other teaching about the salvation by grace that must be examined here because it has the same two-fold import as the teaching that we have examined already. First, the expression "saved by grace" indicates that people are saved by the kindness and love of God through Christ and not through their own righteousness, and second, the important part that teaching the word of God has in the matter of man's salvation. This is the central lesson of the Galatian letter. In the first chapter

of this letter Paul warns the people against moving away from him who called them in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel, unto a perversion of the gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:6-7). To these people who were inclined to leave the simplicity of Christ by combining with his teaching some of the teaching of the law of Moses Paul asked the question, "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now perfected in the flesh?" (Gal. 3:3). And further asked, "He therefore that supplieth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Gal. 3:5). Then he reminded these people, "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness. Know therefore that they that are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham" (Gal. 3:6-7). In all of this, and much other discussion to be found in the book of Galatians, Paul's lesson to them is simply that they are to be saved by faith, becoming sons of Abraham; faith in the Son of God, the promised seed of Abraham, that they might be saved by the grace of God. And in the fifth chapter Paul warns, "Behold, I Paul say unto you, that, if ye receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing. Yea, I testify again to every man that receiveth circumcision, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law; ye are fallen away from grace" (Gal. 5:2-4). Here it is clear that should their faith in Christ as the only Saviour of mankind fail in that they accept circumcision, thus putting trust in their works under the law, that they had fallen away from grace. They had left Christ and the grace of God which

was provided them in Christ. The two-fold import of this teaching which has been briefly summarized is: One, that man can leave the favor or grace of God by turning away from the teaching which God has revealed through the Lord Jesus Christ. And certainly the second is evident, that man must have a love of the truth that will lead him to study God's word that he may seek to do those things which please God and abide in his grace. Of this Paul suggested the importance in his final instruction to the elders of the church at Ephesus. "And now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

If there is any semblance of truth in this discussion, surely I can see that the fact that I am to be saved by the grace of God, if saved at all, does not justify an indifference to the study of the Bible but rather demands an honest, sincere effort to learn its teaching that I may practice it and teach it to my neighbor. God's plan is a teaching plan.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON 15

1. State a third doctrine that has caused people to misunderstand God's plan as a teaching plan.
2. What has encouraged its acceptance?
3. Quote statements to show that man is saved by grace.
4. Give other New Testament translations of the Greek word that is translated grace.
5. What words may be used to translate this Greek word and what advantage would be gained?
6. Where in the New Testament do we find the statement that man is saved by grace?

7. How does Paul give a two-fold picture in this paragraph?
8. How does Paul show the necessity of man's salvation being by grace?
9. To what did Paul point as the source or origin of this grace?
10. What reason did Paul give for man's salvation being by grace?
11. Why was it necessary that salvation should not be through the works of men?
12. Where in the New Testament do we find another teaching of this same lesson?
13. What fact does this illustrate that stresses the personal nature of God's plan?
14. Through what does one receive salvation by grace?
15. Give the statement of this lesson from the Roman letter that shows that Paul was teaching the Ephesians nothing different from what is given in the other New Testament records.
16. Give evidence that the fact that man's salvation by grace is through faith supports the idea that God's plan is a teaching plan.
17. In writing to Titus how did Paul describe the grace of God that hath appeared?
18. What only can turn man away from his wicked course?
19. How does this show the personal nature of God's teaching?
20. Through what does Paul tell Titus that man's salvation is accomplished?
21. Show how this agrees with Peter's teaching on Pentecost?
22. How does man receive the renewing of the Holy Spirit?
23. How is it in order for Paul to speak to Titus about salvation by grace and not one word is said about grace in any record of man's conversion?
24. What is the major import of the book of Titus?
25. What reason does Paul give for the preaching and practicing of God's word?
26. How was the need for continued teaching emphasized in Jesus' commission to the apostles?
27. Show how Paul's doctrine on falling from grace stresses the need for teaching.
28. How did Paul suggest its importance to the elders of the church at Ephesus?

LESSON 16

THE POWER OF THE WORD

In our study of Jesus' Method thus far we have seen from Biblical statements which we have examined that it is a preaching plan. We have also shown that there is no contradiction between this idea and the Biblical teaching on people being taught of God, the work of the Holy Spirit or saved by grace. We shall now continue our consideration of Jesus' Method by reviewing some of the Bible teaching on the power of the word of God.

“For the word of God is living, and active,” (quick and powerful) “and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12). This statement does not appear to be describing the power of God's word in the sense that he can command and bring it to pass, but rather its power to convict, to change, to remake human beings. Despite this plain, emphatic statement in the word of God, occasionally we will hear one say that the Bible is a dead letter. Other remarks that are made by people who hold this idea not only suggest why they judge it to be a dead letter but also the grave danger surrounding them. They speak of it as a book of fables, as stories of the imagination. Thus they have refused to recognize it as the word of God, so they have come to treat it as the

word of men. Concerning a large portion of it, they consider it the mere product of fancy. Thus, so far as they are concerned, it is a dead letter. It has no power over them. It has no constructive influence with them.

The power of any idea or the influence of any teaching upon a man is measured by the respect or honor given to the source from which it comes. This is the reason why we heed the advice of a person who is considered well trained and ignore that of one who is reputed to be poorly trained. When man robs the word of God of its divinity, he has robbed it of its power. So, as far as he is concerned, to him it is a dead letter. Referring to our quotation again, "The word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword," we see that these powers are attributed to the word of God, but for that person who refuses to accept the Bible as the word of God, it has no such powers. It, consequently, carries with it no conviction because it has not been accepted as that standard by which it discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart. Paul showed us the importance of this matter when he said, "And for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that, when ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe" (I Thess. 2:13). The word of God works, exerts its power, only in them that believe and believers are those who have received it as the word of God. Thus, so long as a man refuses the Bible as the word of God, he separates himself from the power in it, and the light of it, and thus continues to grope in

darkness. This is the most serious mistake that mortal can make. The only other mistake of man that is anywise comparable to this one, considering the word of God as the word of men, is to reverse the matter and receive the word of men as the word of God. In the first case he has directly made of non-effect the word of God. In the second case he has done so indirectly by giving man's teaching that honor and that power over him that is due only to God's teaching.

From the statements above we may reasonably conclude that the word of God does not hold some mysterious power within itself such as has been attributed to it by some people. This view of the Bible is no less erroneous than the idea that it is a dead letter and only slightly less dangerous. It causes people to expect of the Bible what was never intended and to excuse themselves from making the use of it that is necessary to every one who would benefit by it. Its power lies in the fact that people believe it to be the word of God and respect, study, and teach it as such. It will not accomplish its work in and of itself. It must be applied in the life of the individual.

The word of God not only holds the power for our guidance, but it is able to save our souls. "Wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21). It has the power to save our souls. This certainly shows us the importance of the word of God to us. But there is another word in this verse which must not be overlooked. We note that it is spoken of as the "implanted word"; that is, that it must

be planted within us if it is going to exercise its power over us, if it is going to have meaning to us. Here the King James version uses the word "ingrafted." Thus it must (be planted) become a part of us. So long as it is merely in our Bible, which is kept on the living room table, in the book case, or in some other place about the home or office, it has no power whatsoever to save our souls. In fact, it is dead, or at least dormant. It is like the seed of wheat; it must be planted. If it is going to bear fruit, if it is going to exert any influence, if it is going to have any power over us, it must be planted in us, it must become a part of us. In this respect it is similar to food, until it has been ingested, digested and assimilated its energy is not usable. On one occasion I listened to a young man read this passage in a public gathering. He was a bit nervous, and not being very well acquainted with this particular word, he read it this way, "Receive with meekness the 'unplanted' word, which is able to save your soul." This is too nearly descriptive of what too many people are expecting, judging from their lack of interest in the Bible. James says the "implanted" or "ingrafted" word has that power. We should not misread his teaching and get the idea that he is saying that the word, without becoming a part of us, has any power over us. If we have this power, we shall be saved. The word of God must be planted in our hearts. We must study it. We must learn it. And if we receive it as the word of God, we will do it.

One day while Jesus was teaching, "A certain woman out of the multitude lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the breasts

which thou didst suck. But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11:27-28). The two words that stand out with us here are "hear" and "keep." We must do both of these things. To hear the word of God and not to keep it, have it with us, and do it, is to no avail. To keep the word of God in the sense that most people do, by keeping their Bible and not to hear it, is just as worthless. The word of God is like leaven. Leaven has great influence over the dough. It changes it from that which is unprofitable to that which makes excellent bread. But in order to do so, it must be within it, it must become a part of it. And so it is necessary that the word of God become a part of us. Paul admonished, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God" (Col. 3:16). Note that he did not say, "Let the word of Christ dwell 'with' you richly," but let it dwell 'in' you richly. Neither does this mean to merely have some acquaintance with the Bible teaching or to be able to quote part of it, but it must have an active part in your life. When a person dwells at a place, he does not merely stop there. It is not an overnight rest place, but it is where he engages in the activities of life. For the word of Christ to dwell in us richly, certainly we must know its teaching, but we must also allow it to be active with us, to exert its power upon us, to have its influence with us in guiding us in the things that we do.

In Paul's farewell speech to the elders of the church at Ephesus he gave this admonition, "And now I commend

you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). Paul told them that the word of God was able to build them up and to give them the inheritance. What it was able to do then it is able to do now. It will build us up. It will give us that inheritance if we will only permit, if we will only lend ourselves to that power, if we will only give it a place in our hearts.

It is interesting and probably significant that the very first statement that Jesus made after the time of his baptism, of which we have a record, is a statement showing man's need for God's word. It was at the time of his temptation. "And the tempter came and said unto him, If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:3-4). You will observe that Jesus' statement is a quotation. Moses gave the teaching to Israel shortly before they entered into the land of Canaan. "And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by everything that proceedeth out of the mouth of Jehovah doth man live" (Deut. 8:3). But they failed to heed its instruction. Their failure to do this is responsible for their failure as God's people. This should be objective evidence that we should not make the same mistake. A very timely question today might be: How

much of the failure among those who claim to be God's people today can be accounted for by the neglect of this same lesson? Certainly the importance of God's word could not be more emphatically taught than by saying that man must live by it, "By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Does not Jesus' statement make it clear that the word of God is just as necessary for our spiritual life as bread is for our physical life?

Everyone recognizes that he must have food to sustain the physical body. It is recognized that this is a need and that the honorable way to meet it is to work. It is also known that study and planning makes one more efficient in supplying this need and gives greater assurance that life will continue. So we train ourselves and we train our children, in part, to that end. We have recognized our physical needs and have prepared to meet them. Is it not true that all intelligent people who recognize their spiritual need will make preparation to meet it? When Jesus teaches us that man lives by the word of God, should it not be clear that if we want to live we must obtain the word of God, that we must secure for ourselves the word of God, that we must feed upon the word of God. Thus those who are seeking life, which is life indeed, should not fail to heed Jesus' declaration. So let us not forget, we must live by the word of God here if we are to live hereafter. To those who grasp this first lesson which Jesus taught, it is not a surprise when they read in the account of Cornelius' conversion that the angel said to Cornelius, "Send to Joppa, and fetch Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall speak unto thee words, whereby thou shalt

be saved, thou and all thy house" (Acts 11:13-14). Peter was preaching the word of God. That was what Cornelius needed that he might live. Yea, that is what is needed by every human being.

We need to recognize, with the prophet, "It is not in man what walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). We need to recognize the defectiveness and inefficiency of man's wisdom and seek the wisdom of God as we have never sought it before. It is not enough merely to admit our weakness, but in our sincerity we must come to feel it, and seek strength at the only source from which it may come. We must cease being anxious and troubled about the many things of life and set our hearts upon the one thing needful. This is the only way we will ever be able to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. For God and his righteousness will never have that value with us which will call forth our effort to seek unless we learn of it more fully from God's word. Too long we have held on to a form of godliness, but have denied the power thereof. We have been too prone to think of Jesus' teaching as that which pertains to life in another world and therein lies its value, overlooking the fact that it is the highest philosophy of living today in this present life.

Probably man's greatest failure has been his failure to understand that he is his greatest problem, and that the personal problem is the greatest problem of society. The material or financial problems have been given the first place by most people, while the personal or spiritual problems have been given far less attention, and with many people have been given practically no place at all.

Hence, we have trained ourselves, and are training our children, to place more importance upon acquiring the material things of life, and selfishly preparing for their own enjoyment and that of their loved ones, than upon the development of their spiritual nature. And in so doing, we are honoring man and humiliating God. Even many of those who have confessed Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, who are members of his church, who wear the name Christian, have forsaken the ideal of greatness as taught by the man of Galilee (the ideal of service) and have become blinded to the fact that the service most needed by his fellow man is spiritual service, and, furthermore, that spiritual service can only be rendered by spiritual people. They want to honor God enough to pacify their conscience and feel that they have a claim upon the next life when this one has passed, but they spend the larger share of their energies, both physical and mental, in seeking those things which provide worldly honor and glory and human enjoyment. Their standard is no longer that which is honest before God, but that which is honorable in the sight of men, men whose approval they seek.

If faithfulness to one of Jesus' principles, as he taught it, will hinder financial gain, by a simple process of human reasoning we liberalize our interpretation of it. If the practice of it will allow some covetous or unscrupulous person to take advantage of us and secure that which is not rightfully his, we ignore the principle and justify our action through rationalization. Our right of ownership legally sustained is so satisfying, his unfairness is so de-

tested, and our love for material things is so strong, that we are blinded to the principle Jesus taught and justify our practice because it is honorable among men and most people are doing it. There are many people who call themselves Christians that go even farther. They will refuse to pay that which is actually due, or will possess that which does not belong to them if it can be done legally. There are still others who will refuse to pay their just debts because they know that the people to whom they owe the money will not collect it by force, and thus little by little the people have allowed the wisdom of men to take precedence over the wisdom of God in their lives.

Another lesson from Jesus on the importance of God's word to man is stated this way, "Jesus therefore said to those Jews that had believed him, If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). What is to make man free? The truth. When Jesus was on trial before Pilate, "Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?" (John 18:37-38). The answer to Pilate's question was given the night before in Jesus' prayer for the twelve. "Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Thus it is through the power of God's word that man is to be made free.

If man would know the truth he should go to the

source of truth, and his source of truth is the word of God. Man is not the word of truth, neither should he be depended upon as the final source. No man is justified in going to his neighbor, his preacher, or his priest as a final source of truth. But this is just what the majority of people are doing and this is one of the gravest errors that is being made among religious people today. On hearing or reading such a statement, probably the most of us are inclined to say, "Yes, that's right." I know of a certain group, or certain groups, of religious people who just take what their preachers have to say and do not study for themselves. But some of the very people in the groups that you would designate as practicing that can look at the group of which you are a part and make the same statement and they are correct. It is being practised among all religious people. The truth is not being sought at its source, and it is the truth that will make man free. The one thing that is needful is to hear Jesus' teaching, not to hear what some man thinks about Jesus' teaching, or what some man thinks is Jesus' teaching, but to hear his teaching, to hear the truth. Did God give man an intelligence for the sole purpose of qualifying him to learn to make a living or does he expect him to use that intelligence in learning from his word how to live? Individually, what use are we making of it?

Upon another occasion, when the Jews were murmuring against Jesus because he had told them that he was the bread of life, Jesus said, "I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: yea and the bread which I will give

is my flesh, for the life of the world" (John 6:51). By this the Jews were even more disturbed and perplexed, and some of the disciples also murmured, whereupon Jesus declared, "It is the spirit that giveth life; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life" (John 6:63). Jesus employed this figurative form of teaching the Jews because they did not seek to know the truth. When they had become concerned over this seeming impossibility which Jesus had said must be accomplished, he thus showed that he did not mean his own literal flesh and blood, but his teaching. There was no spiritual profit to be had by eating his flesh, but there was spirit and life to come through his word. Because of Jesus' teaching on this occasion, many of his disciples went back. "Jesus said therefore unto the twelve, Would ye also go away? Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:67-68). Can we join Peter in this declaration? Can we treat his teaching as the words of eternal life? How can we be so careless with that which means so much? Do we believe Jesus' statement, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my word, he shall never see death" (John 8:51).

Since there is a tendency among men to want to shirk personal responsibility in such a serious matter as that which concerns his eternal destiny, one is likely to make the dodge by conceding that there is great power in the word of God, but that its power does not depend upon man's knowledge of it. Let such a one weigh carefully these words from the apostle Peter, "Seeing that his divine

power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue" (II Pet. 1:3). Thus all things that pertain to life and godliness, whatever they be, are to be had through the knowledge of Christ, through hearing his teaching, through learning his ways. How much do we know about it? There is probably nothing which casts a greater reflection upon the sincerity of religious people than their ignorance of God's word. If people are sincere in the claims which they make for Christianity, why should they not qualify themselves to talk to their neighbors intelligently about it? Why do they not study it? Why do they not read it? It is not uncommon to find an intelligent, educated person who has claimed to be a Christian for five years, or ten years, or even longer, who has not so much as even read the New Testament through one time, but has read other larger books through at one sitting, or within one week. It is no wonder that the world has not been brought under the influence of Bible teaching. It is not surprising that the power of his word has not affected the world more. How could it when many of the people who profess to believe it have no knowledge of it and very little interest in it? This situation has probably done more to discredit the Bible and make it ineffective than anything else.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON 16

1. What power of the word is indicated in Hebrews 4:12?
2. Why has the Bible become a dead letter to many people?
3. What is a measure of the influence of any teaching upon a man?
4. Why does the word of God carry no conviction to some people?
5. Only in whom does the word of God exert its power?
6. What is the most serious mistake that a mortal can make in his thinking of the Bible?
7. What is the only other mistake that is comparable to this one?
8. What is the danger in attributing to the word of God some mysterious power within itself?
9. Quote James' statement showing that the word of God must become a part of us in order to save our souls.
10. In contrast to James what kind of word are many people expecting to be saved by?
11. What did Jesus say to the woman who called to him from the multitude that people should do about the word to be blessed?
12. In what respect is the word of God like leaven?
13. What does it mean for the word of God to dwell in a man richly?
14. What did Paul say about the word of God to the elders at Ephesus?
15. What was the first recorded lesson taught by Jesus after his baptism?
16. On what occasion had this lesson been taught to the people of Israel?
17. What lesson can we draw from their experience?
18. By what must we live here if we are to live hereafter?
19. In this connection what lesson do we need to learn from Jeremiah?
20. What is necessary if God and his righteousness ever have sufficient value to cause us to seek them?
21. What have many overlooked as a value in Jesus' teaching?
22. What is probably man's greatest failure and also the greatest failure of society?
23. What service is most needed by man and who alone can render it?

24. Illustrate how people have allowed the wisdom of men to gradually take precedence over the wisdom of God in their lives.
25. What did Jesus tell those Jews that believed on him should make them free?
26. What is the majority of people accepting as the source of truth?
27. What did Jesus say are spirit and are life?
28. What testimony of the importance of Jesus' teaching did Peter give in his statement to Jesus?
29. Through what did Peter say that we were granted all things that pertain unto life and godliness?
30. What probably has done more to discredit the Bible in its effectiveness than anything else?

LESSON 17

ONE THING IS NEEDFUL

“Now as they went on their way, he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at the Lord’s feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving; and she came up to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. But the Lord answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:38-42).

This is the only Bible account of this visit of Jesus in the home of Martha and Mary in the little town of Bethany about two miles from the city of Jerusalem. The record is brief but it presents unto us a great lesson. In fact, I know of no lesson that is greater. I know of no lesson that is more needed by the world today than this one. I know of no lesson that is needed by more people today than this one. I need it, you need it, everybody needs it. It is a simple lesson but apparently it has not been fully learned. Due to our human way of evaluating things probably its simplicity has contributed to our failure to understand its greatness. We should not confuse

simplicity of statement of any truth with the depth of its meaning, or the magnitude of its value to us. Oh, we have learned it as we have learned many things. We have understood the statement of facts, but have robbed it of its effectiveness by our failure to recognize its importance to us personally. We have failed to recognize that this lesson is basic to our spiritual growth and development as well as to our greatest happiness in our daily relationships. Our failure to learn this lesson and to make it effective in our lives has been responsible for more disappointments and heartaches, more suffering and grief, more loss and destruction than the failure to apply any other single lesson. This is true, for if we learn and apply this lesson we shall gradually learn and apply all others that are good.

Now let us examine the conditions and circumstances under which this lesson was taught. Jesus was visiting in the home of Mary and Martha and Lazarus. It appears that these three made up the household as the Bible record never makes mention of any others. Jesus was a good friend of the family (John 11:3) and certainly would be received with the greatest of hospitality. We are not told what time of day it was but we are told that Martha was "cumbered about much serving." This seems to have been an unexpected visit which may have added to this task. It is not surprising that Martha felt the burden of it as her place of responsibility in the family is shown by the words, "A certain woman named Martha received him into her house." While Martha was preparing the meal, her sister, Mary, "sat at the Lord's feet and heard his

word." No mention is made of Lazarus' presence on this occasion. As Martha set about her work for some reason she was not getting done what she wanted done when she wanted it done or as well as she wanted it done, and consequently she felt the need of help. This was not unusual on such an occasion with one who had probably been accustomed to having help about the kitchen. The method that Martha used, however, in an effort to get this assistance from Mary was quite unusual, at least in comparison with the practices of today. When the one who is preparing the meal needs assistance from some other member of the family that is in the presence of the guests, she proposes to secure that by some unobtrusive method. Usually the one who is wanted is called by some signal that is not noticed by the visitor at all, or under some conditions, she is simply asked to come and render a little assistance or to take care of some particular errand. At other times, especially when the one who is wanted is the only member of the family present with the visitor, the visitor may be asked to please excuse the person for a few minutes to render the necessary service, but never would we propose to get that service as Martha did. She made her direct appeal for help to Jesus himself. "And she came up to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me" (verse 40). We are not told whether Martha had tried to secure the needed assistance by some other means or not. If she had, it had been unsuccessful. If this was Martha's first effort, she evidently recognized that it was a necessary one. Not only did Martha ask

Jesus to bid Mary to help her, but her request is made stronger by making the appeal in terms of his friendship toward her. "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone?" This adds true color to the picture that is drawn in these words, "who sat at the Lord's feet, and heard his word." It evidences how completely Mary was absorbed as she drank at the fountain of life being so intensely interested in Jesus' teaching that other matters were insignificant. On the contrary, someone has suggested that Mary was lazy, but there seems to be very little support for such an idea. In the first place, it is difficult to believe that Jesus would defend or justify any woman, young or old, in any activity that is the mere outcome of laziness, and we must not overlook the fact that Jesus could read the thoughts and attitudes of her heart with much greater accuracy than we can interpret the meaning of her act. In the second place, there is no support for such an idea at any other place in the Bible record.

In reply to Martha Jesus refused her request, gently rebuked her and set forth his lesson in terms of what Mary was doing. "But the Lord answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:41-42). Jesus' lesson is set forth with clarity and emphasis by the method of contrast. Martha was anxious and troubled about many things, all of which were temporal. Mary was concentrating her efforts for the time being on the teaching that was spiritual. It is doubtful

that Jesus intended to apply this contrast to the whole lives of Martha and Mary, that Martha's interest was always in other things, and that Mary's interest and efforts were always in the things which were spiritual. Rather he was contrasting the activities of the moment which serve to typify the life activities of many of the people of that day as well as many of this day. It seems that people have always been prone to allow the temporal things of life to become so important that they rob them of their opportunity to secure spiritual things. This is one of man's greatest dangers today. He gives his time and mental energies to qualifying himself and his children to deal with the material things of life and to participate in social activities. More of his reading time will actually be given to the comic section of the daily newspaper than will be given to the study of God's word. Such people have not learned this lesson. They have not recognized man's one great need, the thing that Mary was doing on this occasion. She was sitting at Jesus' feet hearing his word. This is the simple lesson that Jesus would teach you and me.

Recently I read a statement in which reference was being made to this teaching that pointed out faith as the one thing needful, but this does not appear to fit the context. On this occasion, Mary was doing the thing that was needful, but Martha was not. Surely Jesus did not mean to say that Mary had faith in him and Martha did not, for this would not be in agreement with other statements about Martha in the New Testament record. When Jesus came to Bethany to raise Lazarus from the dead,

Martha went out to meet him and, "Martha therefore said unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. And even now I know that, whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, God will give thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I have believed that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, even he that cometh into the world" (John 11:21-27). Why should Jesus be telling a woman with such a faith as that expressed in these statements that the one thing needful was faith?

Also we should not overlook the Bible teaching on the origin of faith or belief. "So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). In view of this fact, it is evident that Jesus was talking of something more fundamental than faith. For the thing to which he referred, sitting at Jesus' feet and hearing his word, is that which produces faith. However, it not only produces faith, but provides that instruction that will be followed by those who have faith. Yes, the one thing that man needs to do is to sit at Jesus' feet and hear his word. Expressing this in present day terms, it is simply that man needs to study Jesus' teaching, to imbibe Jesus' teaching, to digest and to assimilate it that it may become a part of his very nature, or rather that it may remold him into a new man. The only reason that so many people who

call themselves Christians today are still finding their greatest joy in the things of the world, following the desires of the flesh and failing to find themselves interested in walking in the footsteps of their Saviour in doing that which is good is that they have failed to do the one thing that is needful, to sit at Jesus' feet and to hear his word.

May we be reminded again that this lesson is plain and simple but it is the one lesson of which the world stands in the greatest need. In order that we may be more deeply impressed with this fact, let us look at the world around us and see some of the results of man's failure to accept this simple lesson and to place God's word first in his life.

We have recently experienced the greatest period of destruction of both life and property that is known to man. We have called it the Second World War. During this period thousands upon thousands of people were slain and millions of dollars worth of property destroyed. At the close of that terrible world catastrophe, with its unmentionable atrocities the peoples who were victorious according to the usual pattern of human reasoning charged a very small number of men with the responsibility for the terrible crimes committed against society. I wonder sometimes if this is altogether correct. I wonder if they have been fully responsible for the precipitation of this great world struggle or if it may not be in large part a product of our civilization and outgrowth of human moral deficiency, a natural outcome of people who have been anxious and troubled about the many material things of life but have failed to be provided with the one thing that they need. I wonder how much of the responsibility

for this great conflagration should lie at the feet of that group of people who call themselves Christians. It is true that the movement was led by only a comparatively small number of people, but those millions who were led to participate in such ravages had to be prepared in heart and in life for such a leadership. And this preparation resulted in large part from their being allowed to grow up in their selfishness and wickedness without the one thing that was needful to raise them above such destructive practices and to make such exceedingly repulsive to them. Jesus taught the people this lesson nearly two thousand years ago and through overruling providence the teaching in its original purity has come down even unto this generation, but what have those people who call themselves Christians, who profess to believe this lesson, done about it? If those people in America who profess to believe this teaching had spent one-half, or even one-tenth, of the money in the efforts of propagating this teaching in the countries of Europe and Asia that they have spent in the destruction of life and property which has made no improvement in the world's condition this story might have been different. The one thing that the world needs to do is to sit at Jesus' feet as did Mary and hear his word, and it is wholly the responsibility of us who call ourselves Christians to see that they have every opportunity to do so.

One question might be raised in regard to this matter of world conflict. Since it is unmistakably clear that Christians have failed to propagate the truth, have failed to give unto man the one thing that he needs; since the

church which is the pillar and ground of the truth has failed to hold forth the word of life; the question might even be raised, is it not possible that the present world conditions are a result of providential direction as a chastisement upon God's people for their failure? Surely to us with our nearsightedness and other human limitations it appears that these conditions have arisen from natural causes, and probably that is the case. But that is no conclusive evidence that the Master's hand is not still directing the affairs of this world. With all of our advance in science, with our increased knowledge of the laws of nature especially in the fields of astronomy and physics, with the discovery of the logic in our material chain of cause and effect we are inclined, though believing there is a God behind it all, to believe that he has set the universe in motion both cosmically and socially, and has left it to run its course. Have we not allowed the increase in our material knowledge to provide us a false basis for wisdom and blindness to the message which God gave to Nebuchadnezzar through the prophet Daniel by means of the interpretation of the dreams? "The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Dan. 4:25, 32).

Though we have our varied forms of governments and a variety of ways through which our rulers come to their places of authority, we have our struggles between nations and when the smoke of battle clears away we divide the spoils, with the growing feeling that all things have been left to the control of the forces of men. Yes, this sort of thinking has even reached into our private lives, until all,

except a few of those who are most devout, make their plans with a feeling of certainty, rooted in their confidence in the working of material things, completely forgetting the admonition by James, "For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall both live and do this or that" (James 4:15). How is it that we recognize that God raised up the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Egyptians and others at various times to chastize his people of those days when they had forgotten him or had failed in their obedience to him, but hold the idea that today God uses no warning or restraining influence when general failure is apparent or moral degeneracy is threatening. Would God not do as much for those who have been purchased by the blood of his Son, those who are called by his name, as for those who were his people nationally? In the days of Israel when nations rose up against them, the external conditions always made it appear to be the work of men, and had we not been told, we would never have known that it was under the hand of the Almighty. Might that not be the case even now?

But let us come a little closer to home. What are the conditions that exist right in our own country—our increase in crime, our moral degeneracy, our labor troubles? The conditions in America even before the second world war had become such that those people who were in the place of leadership in governmental affairs had begun to feel the futility of their efforts to solve the existing problems and to call for help. Direct appeals were made through the press to the church people of America to do something. The church people were called upon to save

America, and the idea was expressed that if America was saved they would have to do it. This was one way of saying that America was rapidly becoming morally and socially lost, that it needed the one thing emphasized in Jesus' lesson—to sit at Jesus' feet and hear his word.

In the meantime the war has been fought and won but the conditions in our own country have not improved. If anything, they have grown worse. The report of our Federal Bureau of Investigation for the year 1948 tells us that on the average a murder was committed in the United States every forty-five minutes, day and night, throughout the year. At this rate it would probably take thirty to forty men working eight hours per day, three hundred and sixty-five days in the year, to bury the people who are murdered in America, and we call it a Christian nation. Not only this, but including the murders, major crimes are committed in our country on an average of one every three seconds, to say nothing of the thousands of lesser offences including sex immorality and illegitimate births. These conditions certainly indicate that the one thing that the people of America needs is to sit at Jesus' feet and hear his word. Without the support of religious conviction, moral standards and social practices will rapidly yield to the heat of human propensities.

The failures in the family life of America are also reminders of man's great need for the teaching of his Lord. The most observable failure here, to be sure, is the failure of marriage—the foundation of the home. The increase in the number of divorces in the United States is becoming alarming. The figures vary from one section of the country

to the other or one locality to another. We hear such expressions as, one out of five, two out of five, even three out of five marriages are resulting in divorces. It is reported that in one county in the state of Florida during 1948, there were 1,345 marriages and 1,345 divorces. Among some people the span of marriage is so brief and is recurring so frequently that it suggests that a sort of legalized form of whoredom has developed in America which permits the prostitutes to still hold their place of respect among the American people. This is bad enough even though it is only practiced among the minority. What is probably worse is the increasing popularity of divorce among the people of the country generally, including no small number of cases among people who call themselves Christians. This is what has helped to raise the practice to the level of respectability. Jesus has pointed out to us the one thing that is needed. There are no two people who have truly sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word and have accepted it as their rule of practice that can be separated and divorced. By this statement I do not mean that they have heard only his teaching on marriage and his clear declaration that their marriage vows can honorably be broken only by death. I judge all people who are married are aware of the fact that that is right and unhesitatingly made such vows at the altar. This is not their major difficulty. It is rather that they have failed to have or receive that training from the word of God that would produce such characters as may live together in such intimate association in harmony, and in their unselfishness may be capable of happily adjusting to the differences of

judgment that will inevitably arise. Yes, the divorce evil is an unmistakable evidence of man's needs for Jesus' teaching as his practical guide to happiness in the home.

The divorce, however, is not the only mark of this deficiency. There are too many homes in America that continue in a state of unhappiness. There is continued or frequent discord between parents, discord between parents and children, discord among the children all because they are not trying to practice those principles which Jesus taught that provide the only sure basis of harmony among people. We know that such conditions do exist and we should know that they are unmistakable evidences that those who participate have not, in the real meaning of the expression, sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word.

We have spoken of world troubles, national troubles, and family troubles. Now we arrive at the source of them all and the many others in addition. They must all begin with the individual. The personal failures of the individual are the roots of human discord in all the areas of man's association. Yes, all of the world's difficulties have their beginning in the failures in personal development of individuals and the only safe guide to such development is the wisdom which Jesus brought down from above. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23).

You may read in your morning paper that John Doe paid with his life this morning at sunrise for the murder of his neighbor, committed some twelve months earlier. Why did John Doe come to such a spot? When he was born he was as innocent as you or I. You answer, "His training

was different." Yes, he missed the one thing that he needed—to hear Jesus' word. He may have heard something about it. His parents may have tried to teach him, but for some reason he failed to get it. You may read in your paper of the conviction of numerous people for a large variety of crimes. Each one of which should be a reminder of the failure of society. And the failure of society means the failure of those who call themselves Christians. Our people have not been given what they need.

Crimes, however, that are brought to public notice because of their gravity are not the only marks of the need of Jesus' teaching in our individual lives. That need may be shown by the kind of language one uses, by the gossip one tattles, by the beverage one drinks, by the selfish use that one makes of his means, by one's unkind remarks, by one's failures to use his opportunities for good, or by numerous other acts of omission or commission. Yes, all need to hear Jesus' teaching. We all need it now. From the worst of us to the best of us, we need to sit at Jesus' feet and hear his word.

Thus far we have been considering the conditions of the world generally as evidences of man's need of the guidance of God's word. We shall now consider evidences of this need among religious people. We shall limit this discussion to the people of our own country since we are better acquainted with the conditions here and probably should have greater concern for the conditions here. The group of people made up of those who call themselves

Christians, the religious people of America, have failed to get the one thing that they need.

The first great evidence of this is to be found in the multiplicity of religious differences. According to a late census we have more than 250 religious groups in America with their own individual doctrines. But our Saviour taught only one doctrine as was set forth in lesson one of this series. Furthermore, human intelligence is not sufficiently inconsistent to claim or admit that Jesus taught such a multiplicity of conflicting ideas. It is recognized by all that Jesus taught one teaching, the teaching which he brought from the one God. Then what is the explanation of our present religious confusion? Stating the answer briefly, it is the result of the failure of religious people to sit at Jesus' feet and hear his word. For had we all heard God's teaching in its purity, had we all believed God's teaching as it was spoken, we would have had one teaching, we would have been one people.*

A second evidence that the religious people of America need to sit at Jesus' feet and hear his word is to be found in the large number of differences of Bible interpretation found among the individuals of the respective church groups. They are not unlike the others in character and may be distinguished from them only by the fact that for some reason they have not been made religious issues. They are practically the same in origin and as they indicate digression from the truth they have also resulted from a failure to sit at Jesus' feet and hear his word. Thus it

*A complete answer to this question can be found in the author's book, *Why Do People Not See the Bible Alike?*

is clear that the people whose responsibility it is to give to the world the one thing that it needs has a serious need of the same thing. Yes, the greatest need of church people today is to truly sit at Jesus' feet and hear his word instead of putting their trust in the human distortions that are being peddled as the word of God.

A third evidence that church people are still in need of Jesus' teaching is to be found in the large percentage of those who call themselves Christians who hold to their religion only nominally or formerly. They do not attend the services or attend only part of them. They make no preparation to take part in the services. They are indifferent to the song service, to the reading, to the prayer. They are easily distracted by personal affairs. They do not prepare their Bible lesson for the class to be held even when they do attend. They do not support the work of the church financially. They seem to have little or no interest in teaching or helping to teach the truth to other people. In brief, "they hold to a form of godliness, having denied the power thereof." Furthermore, there are too many church people who have divorced religion from life. They may be reasonably faithful to their church obligations but their personal practices from day to day are not in accord with Jesus' teaching but are a disgrace to the name they wear. The failure of many to be respected by their fellows both in their religious life, or church life, and in their daily living among men is evidence that they have not sincerely sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word.

A fourth evidence of this need among church people is frequently found in the failure of the local congregation

to work in peace, the ease with which divisions and dissensions can arise. It seems sometimes that almost any difference of opinion in the necessary arrangement of church affairs will give rise to discord and all too frequently to division, division of such a nature that it perpetuates ugly attitudes. Such divisions may be occasioned by the selection of a preacher, the choosing of song books, the selection of elders, the construction of a new building or almost any other detail of necessary management. What greater evidence could there be that many people who call themselves Christians do not have the real influence of the word of God in their heart. They have simply not sat at Jesus' feet and truly heard his word.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON 17

1. Where and to whom did Jesus teach the lesson, "One thing is needful"?
2. Why is this such an important lesson?
3. What expression suggests Martha's place of responsibility?
4. How did Martha try to get Mary to help with the meal?
5. What bearing does this have upon the lesson that Jesus taught?
6. What makes it appear doubtful that Mary was not helping Martha because she was lazy?
7. What was the point of contrast between Mary and Martha that Jesus was using to illustrate this lesson?
8. Give two points that would oppose the idea that the one thing needful is faith.
9. In what sense may Christians have been partly responsible for the second world war?
10. Of what may the present world conditions be a result?
11. To what king did God make known the fact that the "Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men"?
12. What lesson did James teach that implies God's oversight in the affairs of men?
13. What reasoning from the conditions of Jewish history lends support to the idea that present world conditions may be a chastisement from the Almighty?
14. List many of the conditions in America today that indicate America's great need to "sit at Jesus' feet and hear his word."
15. Describe some of the failures in family life today that indicate the need for sitting at Jesus' feet hearing his word.
16. What is really the source of all of man's trouble—world, national and family?
17. List a variety of practices among individuals that indicate man's need to "sit at Jesus' feet and hear his word."
18. Carefully describe four evidences among religious people that they need to "sit at Jesus' feet and hear his word."

LESSON 18

GOD'S PLAN AND MAN'S THINKING

Let us continue our study of "Jesus' Method" by considering man's thinking in its relation to God's plan. God provided man with the ability to think, the greatest part of man's superiority over the lower animals. It is both interesting and important to learn from God's word the vital role played by this ability in man's future, and at the same time to observe how God has made his plan to suit man's nature.

THINKING AND ACTION

The word "think" has two common usages. It may refer to a mental process or to a conclusion or conviction as a result of mental processes. There was once proposed a theory in psychology known as the "ideo-motor theory" which held that action directly and regularly followed mental processes. To secure an action it was only necessary to arouse that mental process. This theory has been discarded as unsound. It is fortunate for man that there is no such principle which operates in his nature. On the other hand, man's thinking and evaluation is the basic control of his actions. It is true that much of our speech and action appears to be carried on without much thought. This, however, is the result of poor or erroneous thinking, or the result of making the matter habitual, having its basis in former thought or decision. While all

of man's thoughts or decisions may not go into action, all of man's serious action is accompanied with and controlled by his thinking.

This is abundantly set forth in the Bible teaching. Jesus shows us that the long prayers of the Gentiles were the result of their erroneous thinking. "And in praying use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking" (Matt. 6:7). Thus their praying was determined by their thinking. When Paul and Barnabas had made their first missionary journey, adjusted some matters with the church at Antioch, and were preparing to go on a second missionary tour, the question arose about taking John Mark with them. "And Barnabas was minded to take with them John also, who was called Mark. But Paul thought not good to take with them him who withdrew from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work" (Acts 15:37-38). Here we are told that Paul "thought it not good to take him." This thought led to a separation of Paul and Barnabas in the work, Paul taking one direction and Barnabas another.

When Ananias sold a possession and kept back part of the price and brought part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet, Peter indicated the evil nature of what he did by the question, "Why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land?" (Acts 5:3), and the source of the evil by the question, "How is it that thou hast conceived this thing in thy heart?" (Acts 5:4). Undoubtedly Ananias' evil act was occasioned by the evil thinking of his own heart.

Another case in point is that of the Philippian jailor. Paul and Silas were in the jail at Philippi and the earthquake shook the foundations of the prison house and the doors were loosed. "The jailor, being roused out of sleep and seeing the prison doors open, drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped" (Acts 16:27). Why was the jailor about to kill himself? It was the result of his thinking. He thought the prisoners had escaped and knew the penalty for him would be death. Fortunately for him, however, before he could commit his act of suicide something happened to change his thinking and consequently to change his act. "But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. And he called for lights and sprang in, and, trembling for fear, fell down before Paul and Silas" (Acts 16:28-29).

In referring to the life which he lived before his conversion, Paul tells us, "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this I also did in Jerusalem: and I both shut up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, and when they were put to death I gave my vote against them" (Acts 26:9-10). So Paul's life of blasphemy and persecution was the product of his thought, or conviction. In order to change Paul's life, his thinking had to be changed. His new thinking is shown in the following statement, "Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain

Christ" (Phil. 3:8). When he had come to think of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and not an imposter, he began to count the "excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus" far above all other things, and was willing to suffer the loss of them all that he might gain Christ.

This is one of the greatest needs of the world today. This is one of the greatest needs of those people who call themselves Christians today. If people could only come to think that a knowledge of Christ is important and more important than all other things with which we are concerned, they would give more time to the study of his teaching. But so long as it holds a lesser place in their thinking, it will hold a lesser place in their actions. The importance of our thoughts is incomprehensible and immeasurable. Speaking again of the thoughts which he held in his new life, or rather the thoughts that held him to his new course, Paul said, "Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold: but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14). Recognizing that the prize to be won was great, and counting not himself to have laid hold upon it, Paul was stimulated to his great life of action.

The trouble with many people today who call themselves Christians is the lack of these two great thoughts. They seem rather to be controlled by the thought that they have accepted Christ, have complied with certain forms or rituals, have become a church member, and therefore, they are saved. There are many people who

would deny that they hold to this thought. In fact, they do not theoretically endorse it, but in reality it is a part of their mental content. They seem to be perfectly satisfied to feel no obligation as Christians. They seem to expect their church membership to take care of the matter.

Paul made this description of some who were not held by that thought, "For many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is perdition, whose god is the belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Phil. 3:18-19). And not being held by that kind of thinking they were minding earthly things. Without being possessed of these great energizing thoughts, many people today are following in their steps. Thus, the trouble with many religious people today is in their thinking.

In his parable against covetousness, Jesus shows us again the operation of the same principle. "And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he reasoned within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have not where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry. But God said unto him, Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:16-21). Here is a

man who was facing a problem. Before he was ready to do anything about the matter, "he reasoned within himself." His action was the product of that reasoning or thinking. When his thinking had indicated the course, he was ready for action. Let us note that he was a rich man. He had plenty before this bountiful harvest, but his selfish thoughts still controlled him. There were probably many people in need, or many good uses that could have been made of his surplus, but his thoughts were of himself and his action was for himself. Had his thoughts been different, his judgment would have been different, his action would have been different.

THAT WHICH DEFILES A MAN

While Jesus was in the land of Genessaret, Pharisees and scribes came to him from Jerusalem and asked why his disciples did not wash their hands when they ate bread. This was a Jewish tradition. After Jesus had rebuked them for making void the word of God by their traditions, he called the multitude to him and admonished them to hear and to understand. Then he proclaimed this truth, "Not that which entereth into the mouth defileth the man; but that which proceedeth out of the mouth, this defileth the man" (Matt. 15:11). Later Peter asked him to declare unto them the parable. "And he said, Are ye also even yet without understanding? Perceive ye not, that whatsoever goeth into the mouth passeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But the things which proceed out of the mouth come forth out of the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart come forth evil thoughts,

murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, railings: these are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not the man" (Matt. 15:16-20). These statements make it clear that the Jews were concerned about the wrong thing. Their tradition was without foundation. Those things that were eaten went into the digestive system, and at most increased or decreased energy, they did not contaminate the life and would not make a man unclean before his Maker.

That which defiles the man, that which makes him unclean before God is that which comes out of his heart. Those decisions that he has made that are evil, they defile the man. Out of the heart cometh forth the evil thoughts and the evil deeds as well. The acts of murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, reviling, all have their beginning in the thoughts of man's heart. Not only is this true but the evil thought itself defiles the man. He is defiled before he commits the act. He is defiled whether or not he ever commits the act. Jesus said, "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, that every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment" (Matt. 5:21-22). From this we see that one who has those murderous thoughts in his heart is warned of the same danger as the one who commits the act. Again Jesus said, "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. 5:27-28). In this

statement Jesus makes it clear that the one who has a lust for adultery is an adulterer before God, just as though he had committed the very act. When man has set aside God's teaching in his heart by accepting the thought and formulating the desire to do that which he should not, he is a sinner before God. He is defiled and his heart is unclean. For man to know what kind of man one is, it is necessary for his thoughts to be expressed either in words or actions, but this is not the case with God. He knoweth the thoughts of the heart, the words and the acts are simply the outward expression of that which is within. Man condemns for the outward expression. God condemns for the inward condition.

On the first thought it may appear somewhat surprising that such a tradition could become so firmly established among a people that they would not only practice it but challenge others who failed to do so. However, when we recall the fact that it was God's law to the Jews that to touch any of a number of unclean things including a person who for any reason was unclean caused one to be unclean and required a sacrifice even though it was done unknowingly (Lev. 5:2-4), it is easy to understand how man's thinking could lead him to make such an addition to God's teaching. Since man still comes to his convictions and consequently his practices through the process of thinking, we are still confronted with the same danger of perversions of Bible teaching. Not only do we have the danger but evidently we have the perversions. We also have the same attitude toward them that the Jews mani-

fested in this case, we cannot understand why other people do not do as we do.

James shows the importance of the thoughts in a very unusual way. "My brethren, hold not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come into your synagogue a man with a gold ring, in fine clothing, and there come in also a poor man in vile clothing, and ye have regard to him that weareth the fine clothing, and say, Sit thou here in a good place; and ye say to the poor man, Stand thou there, or sit under my footstool; do ye not make distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?" (James 2:1-4). Here he describes the wrong practices and then expresses the evil of the matter in terms of the thoughts that they have.

Let us look next at the case of Simon the sorcerer. Simon had accepted the teaching of Philip, had been baptized, and was continuing with him, when Peter and John came down from Jerusalem and gave the people the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands. "Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit. But Peter said unto him, Thy silver perish with thee, because thou hast thought to obtain the gift of God with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right before God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray the Lord, if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee. For I see that thou art in the

gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity” (Acts 8:18-23). Note that Peter did not condemn Simon because he had offered to buy the gift of God with money, but he condemned him for having that thought in his heart. He also gives for the reason that Simon has no part in the matter, that his heart is not right before God. Still further emphasis is added when he exhorts him to repent of his wickedness, he tells him to pray for the forgiveness of the thought of his heart.

Not only was Simon's trouble heart trouble, but the cancerous disease which is gnawing away at the vitals of Christianity today is heart trouble. All of our spiritual trouble is heart trouble in that it begins in the thought of our heart. In the light of these thoughts, it is not surprising that Jesus included in the beatitudes, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8). The one thing that defiles a man is the thought of his own heart. Then let us be wise and accept the admonition of the wise man, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; For out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). And let's not forget that a part of our warfare is, “bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (II Cor. 10:5).

BE YE TRANSFORMED

“And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:2). This is a part of one of Paul's heart-searching appeals to those who have become Christians. They have been translated from the kingdom of

darkness into the kingdom of the Son of his love but that is not the end of the matter. To be pleasing to God, they must become transformed. In their molding and making from here on they should not be fashioned according to this world but should become different, being fashioned according to the pattern of the Lord Jesus Christ. In telling them that they should be transformed, Paul tells them how this transformation may be acquired: "by the renewing of your mind." So long as one has the mind of the flesh, he will follow after the things of the flesh. So long as he thinks the thoughts of the world, he will engage in the practices of the world and continue to be fashioned according to the world. The wise man has expressed the principle this way, "For as he thinketh within himself, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). Not that thinking himself to be good will make a good man, or thinking himself to be evil will make him evil, but the man whose mind is filled with good thoughts will have a life filled with good acts, and will be a good man, and the man whose mind is filled with evil thoughts will have a life filled with evil acts and will be an evil man.

Why can we not learn this principle? Why can we not put it into practice? For a long time we have observed, respected, and applied the divine principles under which the physical world operates. We have made wonderful use of the law of gravity, the principle of contraction and expansion, and the natural requirements for combustion. In the plant world we have learned that certain conditions are necessary to satisfactory production. We apply these and produce our crops. We are acquainted with the law

of growth and maturity in the realm of lower animal life. We have applied it with satisfactory results. We have also recognized the orderly principles that function in the physical development of man. But alas! the principle of man's spiritual growth has received little attention. Will we never learn that there is only one way to make a good man? Fill his mind with good thoughts, fill his heart with the right sense of values and you will fill his life with good deeds. Yes, "be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds." The principle is just as definite and unfailing as the principle of gravity.

In writing to the Philippians, Paul tells us the kind of mind that we ought to have. "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in a fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:5-8). What was the mind of Christ? It was that mind which was filled with unselfish thoughts. Though he had all the glories with his Father before he came into the world, he did not want simply to enjoy them, but was willing to give them up for the good of others. Not only that, but he was willing to give himself up in the life of service that others might have the abundant life. He was willing to give himself up in that service that brought him to the sacrifice upon the cross. What a contrast this is to the selfishness that is generally found among us. And what a transformation there would

be if all who claimed to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ had the mind of Christ. Peter admonished, "For as much then as Christ suffered in the flesh, arm ye yourselves also with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that ye no longer should live the rest of your time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God" (I Pet. 4:1-2). Here people are urged to take the mind of Christ as an armor, as a protection against living to the lusts of men and as a support in living to the will of God. This is the one result of being transformed by a renewing of one's mind.

It is hoped that this brief examination of the Bible teaching on the mode of human control and development will help us to understand Jesus' method as a teaching method that we may better qualify ourselves to use it. May we more fully realize that we must change man's thinking to change the man. May we never forget that this applies to us. If you and I would become better, we must make our thinking better by learning God's word and giving it a vital place in our thinking that it may mold our actions.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON 18

1. What two interesting and important things should we learn from God's word in this lesson?
2. Give two common usages of the word "think" and indicate the one with which we are particularly concerned in this lesson.
3. What is the real basic control of man's serious action?
4. What did the Gentiles do that was wrong because of their thinking?
5. What difference in thinking led to the separation of Paul and Barnabas?

6. What thinking did Ananias do that caused him trouble?
7. What change in thinking saved the life of the Philippian jailor?
8. Show how the life of Saul of Tarsus was changed by a change in his thinking.
9. State two of Saul's new thoughts that are very much needed by people who call themselves Christians today?
10. What thought seems to console many people who call themselves Christians today?
11. What was the basic trouble of those people that Paul described as "enemies of the cross of Christ"?
12. Show how the parable that Jesus spake against covetousness illustrates the relation of man's thinking to his action.
13. Give the setting and briefly the lesson that Jesus taught about a man being defiled by that which cometh out of the heart.
14. Give illustrations from the Sermon on the Mount that indicate that the real defilement of man is in the thought of his heart.
15. Describe that part of the Jewish background that may have led to a perversion of God's teaching resulting in their tradition of washing hands.
16. In what connection does James show the importance of one's thinking?
17. Give evidence that the trouble of Simon, the sorcerer, was in his thinking.
18. How might all of man's spiritual trouble really be classified?
19. What is the admonition of the wise man on this matter?
20. What does Paul indicate as a part of our warfare?
21. By what process is one who has accepted Christ to be transformed?
22. How does the wise man express this principle that a man's thinking determines a man?
23. Name some of God's divine principles that we have learned to use.
24. State the divine principle of man's spiritual growth.
25. State and describe the kind of mind that God's people should have.
26. Against what is one armed who has taken the mind of Christ?
27. How only can we change a man?

LESSON 19

A PECULIAR PEOPLE

These words are used in I Peter 2:9 and Titus 2:14 in the King James translation to describe God's people. Some people have taken the word peculiar to mean cranky or eccentric, and consequently have adopted practices which have no greater quality to commend them. Should a comment be made about their odd way of doing things, it is very glibly defended with the statement, "Well, you know we are commanded to be a peculiar people." The fact is, there is no such commandment in the word of God, but as stated in the beginning of these comments, God's people are described as a peculiar people. The word peculiar in its generally accepted usage does not mean eccentric or cranky, but "Belonging to an individual, privately owned, not common. Different from the usual or normal" (Webster). As used here the word indicates "God's ownership." In the Nelson Revision instead of "a peculiar people," we find the expression, "a people for God's own possession." It is evident also from the preceding lesson that God's people are to be changed by the renewing of their minds, patterning their lives like that of Jesus, and certainly "different from the usual."

But why are God's people different, or peculiar? The answer in brief is simply because they have a different, or peculiar God. He is divine while all other gods are of

human origin, either the work of man's hands or the products of man's imagination, consciously or unconsciously. Thus God made man, and man made all other gods. Since nothing is ever greater than its maker, man's gods (other than Jehovah) are never greater than man. Thus the power and wisdom of other gods will also be of human origin and never above human level. Therefore, the people whose god is Jehovah are guarded by a divine wisdom while all others are following human wisdom and herein lies the difference. In Isaiah's record we are told, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:8-9). Not only are God's ways so much higher than man's ways and his thoughts so much bigger than man's thoughts, but God's people have accepted God's thoughts and have learned to walk in God's ways. So, not only is our God a peculiar God, but his people are a peculiar people because they follow a different or peculiar teaching.

When Jesus came proclaiming God's teaching, it was so different that the people wondered and marveled. When Jesus finished his sermon on the mount we are told that, "It came to pass, when Jesus had finished these words, the multitudes were astonished at his teaching: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes" (Matt. 7:28-29). "And coming into his own country he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this

the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joseph, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?" (Matt. 13:54-56). "But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. The Jews therefore marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" (John 7:14-15). During that same feast the chief priests and the Pharisees sent officers to take him that they might put him to death, but they came back without doing so. When they were asked why they did not bring him, "The officers answered, Never man so spake" (John 7:46).

That we may also be impressed with the unusual nature of God's teaching which he has given through Jesus and its power to make people different, let us review some of the basic ideas of human society with their accompanying practices in comparison with Jesus' teaching in the respective fields.

One of the ideas that has always dominated the pagan world, and still dominates it for the major part of the world is still pagan, is the idea of getting. Money or wealth is the great source of worldly pride and pleasure. It will provide more worldly honor and more fleshly satisfaction than anything else that is known to a man of the world. It is little wonder that we have had, and still have, the mad rush to accumulate worldly possession. Some covet riches that they may have the place of worldly honor, while others want to get this world's goods to spend them in their pleasure. Whatever be the purpose,

the controlling idea seems to be to get it, and unfortunately the desire for material things is so strong that frequently principles of fairness and the rights of others are completely ignored. This is certainly nothing short of covetousness and we know that Jesus said, "Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). And Paul wrote, "For this ye know of a surety, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God" (Eph. 5:5). This idea of getting has not only been responsible for much unfairness and providing us with a society which cannot be trusted, but it has probably been the most common cause for lying, stealing, murder and many other practices that have brought sadness and disappointment into the lives of men. Paul declared, "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (I Tim. 6:10). Without attempting to detail the picture, it is commonly known by all who have any acquaintance with Bible teaching that those who follow the teaching of our God cannot practice such things.

However, the contrast between people who practice such and those who do not gives only a part of the picture. If we are to see the real difference between people generally and God's people in this field, we must contrast the people who are dominated with the idea of getting with the people whose lives are controlled by the idea of giving. We are not only taught not to love the things of this world, but we are taught to use the things of this world for the

benefit of others. Paul drew the contrast in these words, "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need" (Eph. 4:28).

If we were to stop our comparison at this point, is there any person of average intelligence who would fail to recognize the person whose philosophy of life is to give as different from that one whose prevailing idea is to get. The former person would not only deal completely fairly with his neighbor but would be ready with what he had honestly earned to help him who had been less fortunate; while the latter would have little or no concern for the unfortunate and might become so engrossed in his quest for material things, as to become a liar, a thief, or a murderer.

There is another contrasting point closely associated with this one. The people of the world have always sought to be served, but Jesus came teaching people to serve. The world has always measured greatness by the number of people that serve you, but Jesus' measure of greatness is the number of people whom you serve. While Jesus was associated with the twelve, teaching and preparing them to pass his peculiar teaching on to the world, they seemed to hold the same idea of greatness. Time after time the question was raised, "Who will be greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Who would occupy the places of honor? Who would rule and be served? Even the mother of James and John came to Jesus on one occasion and made the request that her two sons sit one on his right hand, the other on the left in his kingdom. After

he had disposed of the request by saying, "But to sit on my right hand, and on my left hand, is not mine to give; but it is for them for whom it hath been prepared of my Father . . . Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you: but whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:23, 25-28). Here Jesus expresses the ideas in contrast. The rulers of the Gentiles or the great ones of the world exercise authority and are served by others, but greatness among Jesus' people is being able to serve others.

Another point of contrast between Jesus' teaching and that held and practiced by the world is in the matter of vengeance. According to the ideas which have always dominated society, when one was wronged by his fellow, he was expected to avenge that wrong. That was a regular part of the Jewish practice. Jesus set forth his teaching in contrast to it. "Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him two" (Matt. 5:38-41). While the world has always followed the idea

of getting revenge, Jesus' teaching is to forgive; rather to take wrong than to do wrong.

Another point in which Jesus' teaching stands out in bold contrast to the idea that men have always followed is in respect to man's attitude and dealings with his enemy. The world has always expected man to love his friend and to do him good, but it has just as definitely expected that he hate his enemy. But Jesus taught man to love his enemy. How different, how strange, how peculiar that teaching must have sounded and it still sounds peculiar to most people, even to many people who have accepted the teachings of Christ according to their profession. Jesus' statement of the contrast is as follows: "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the Gentiles the same?" (Matt. 5: 43-47).

There are many other points in which Jesus' teaching contrasts with the general teaching and practices that man has held, and does hold, but these four will suffice to illustrate our point. It is not necessary for God's people to adopt odd, unusual, or eccentric practices in dress, speech or behavior just to be peculiar or different. All they need to do is to faithfully follow the teaching that

God has given them which is so different in its divine nature and wisdom from the sordid, selfish practices of men. People who are controlled by the teaching to give, to serve, to forgive, to love enemies, etc., are as much unlike those whose lives are dominated by the practices of getting, seeking to be served, hating their enemies, getting revenge, etc., as the light is unlike the darkness. The more dense the darkness the greater will be the contrast. Therefore, the darker the world the brighter the life of a true Christian will shine. Then why are God's people peculiar? They have different purposes, different ideals, different sense of values. They do things that are so different from the way the world does them. And why do they do so differently? Because they have forsaken man's ways and are following God's ways. And they have come to do this by forsaking man's thoughts and accepting God's thoughts. We refer to God's own statement to Isaiah again, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah" (Isa. 55:8). This is the only way that man can ever come to walk in God's ways. He must first learn to think God's thoughts. He must become transformed by the renewing of his mind. This is the divine law of spiritual growth and until man comes to the place where he can give up his own thoughts, where he can abandon his own human ideas and replace them by the teaching which God has given us through his Son, there is no hope of his being pleasing to his heavenly Father.

Then, as we have learned to apply God's law in the physical world, in the plant world, in the lower animal

world, as concerns the animal part of man, let us learn to apply his spiritual law which is just as immutable when we have renewed our minds and purified our hearts by filling them with the teachings of the Son of God. Our ideals will be different from those of the world. Our attitudes toward various things will be different from those of the world. Our interests will be different from those of the world. Our habits will be different from those of the world. In fact, then and not until then, will we have truly become new creatures. Then will the statement made by Paul be realized, "Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new" (II Cor. 5:17). "For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature" (Gal. 6:15). Let those of us who have accepted the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ assure ourselves that following those teachings as faithfully as we should will make of us a peculiar people, a people for God's own possession. And so surely is this the case, that it is safe to test ourselves by this point, if we are not markedly different from the world in our daily living, in the way we treat the people and the things about us, then we are merely holding to a form of godliness and have denied the power of it. May we come to more fully understand that God expects us to be new creatures by being molded by new thoughts, and not by merely making the confession and being baptized.

Since in considering this topic, attention has been given only to those ideas that affect man in his human relationships, it appears advisable that our attention be called to

the fact that God has also given teaching directing man's program of activity as it relates to his Maker that is just as important in molding a people for God's own possession as that teaching which we have considered that regulates man's activities among men. Why should anyone think that one who adjusts his life to upright living in civil and social affairs but refuses to participate in the religious activities through which he has been taught to render personal homage to God can be a loyal citizen in his kingdom? Surely, we must humble ourselves before our Sovereign as well as live honorably with his subjects.

Even though the contrast that has been drawn between God's people and the people of the world, between children of God and children of the devil, has been far from complete, it has been sufficient to lead one to expect to be able to identify God's people with ease. In the limitation of human wisdom two sets of conditions have contributed to the task of identification. In the first place, there are many people who have refused to confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God and accept him as their Saviour that have accepted and do apply in their lives many of the principles of Christian living. In fact, there are many who have adopted a proper attitude toward the material things of life subordinating them and making them serve for the good of mankind. Also in terms of their human relationships, they are living lives of service. They are not revengeful in nature and have learned to have a good attitude even toward their enemies. In fact, there are some people who have accepted Jesus' teaching relative to human relationships and obligations with such sincerity

and have applied it with such earnestness that others could not do better. These are outstanding people among their fellows and their good lives are recognized and praised. There are also those among the people who have rejected the mercy of God through our Lord Jesus Christ that have accepted some of these principles of living but ignored others. Consequently, we find a gradation ranging all of the way from a zealous effort of universal application to a partial effort limited to a very narrow field of application.

On the other hand, there are too many people among those who have confessed Jesus to be the Son of God and who have proposed to accept him as their personal Saviour that have varied widely in the teachings of Jesus which they have truly accepted for personal application. Some have honestly and wholeheartedly accepted the Bible teachings. They have sought to understand and apply in their own lives those teachings that govern man in his relationships to his fellow man as well as those that direct his activities relative to God. Others have given reasonable attention to instruction relative to church and worship, but have grossly ignored that which pertains to human relationships. Still others who call themselves Christians have been very negligent of all Bible teachings.

As we are accustomed to arrive at many of our decisions through the method of comparison, these conditions tend to confuse our judgment. In view of these conditions, there are two facts which should not be overlooked in arriving at our decisions. The first is that our God has taught us how we should behave toward him and also

how we should deal with each other. The second fact is that he has never told us that we could be pleasing to him and people for his own possession by accepting the teaching in one relationship and neglecting it in the other. These things being true one should not reckon himself to be prepared for God's own possession because he has done well in applying God's teaching relative to human relationships, but given less care in applying to his own life that instruction relative to church and worship activities. Neither should that one adjudge himself an heir of eternal life who has zealously given his attention to that instruction that pertains to church and worship but has made little or no effort to learn how to live with his fellows according to that instruction that will transform him as an individual. Rather we must all learn to love God and honor him by respecting his teaching in its entirety. We must believe in God to fully sanctify him in the eyes of men by implicit obedience to his word wherever he has spoken.

Are these things true? Is it true that the people for God's own possession are so outstandingly different from those who know not God? Is it true that this great difference is due to the fact that God's people have made God's teaching their guide and have learned to manifest his spirit in their daily activity? Is it true that both social and religious activities must be thus guided? Is it true that man's activities are guided by his thinking and feelings? Is it true that man's thinking and feelings are largely controlled by his established convictions? Is it true that man's convictions are the products of learning? Is it true

that the greatest aid to learning is teaching? Is it true that God's plan is a teaching plan? Is it true that you and I have accepted it as such by making it our personal guide? If not, why not?

QUESTIONS ON LESSON 19

1. What use is made of the expression, "a peculiar people" in the King James translation of the Bible?
2. Define peculiar according to Webster.
3. What expression replaces this in the Revised Version?
4. Give a brief answer to the question, "Why are God's people different or peculiar?"
5. Who made all of our gods except Jehovah?
6. Why should we expect people who have Jehovah as God to be different from those who worship other gods?
7. In Isaiah's record what contrast does God make between himself and man?
8. Give Bible evidence that Jesus' teaching was unusual.
9. State some of the ill effects that have come to the world because it is dominated by the idea of getting.
10. In contrast what idea dominates Christians and what difference results.
11. Contrast the world and Christians in terms of their ideas of greatness.
12. What indicates that Jesus' apostles were still following the worldly idea?
13. Draw a picture of the difference between the world's idea and the Christian idea of vengeance.
14. Contrast the worldly idea and the Christian idea in regard to enemies.
15. Show from a summary of these four points of contrast what a Christian would need to do to be a peculiar person.
16. According to our study in lesson 17 what do people need to do to become peculiar people?
17. If we are true Christians what will be some of the points of difference between us and people of the world?

18. What does Paul write the Corinthian people that indicates that this is a necessary change?
19. Besides the teaching that regulates man's activities among men what other teaching is just as important in molding a people for God's own possession?
20. Describe two sets of conditions that have contributed to the task of identifying Christians.
21. In view of these conditions what two facts should not be overlooked in arriving at our decision?
22. Summarize our obligations to God.

LESSON 20

THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). This is Paul’s testimony which he declared to the people in Rome and which has been recorded as a part of God’s instruction to us. Paul was not ashamed of the gospel. He had good reason not to be ashamed of the gospel. He knew it to be “the power of God unto salvation.” Everybody who accepts Paul’s testimony and holds a sincere conviction in his own heart that the gospel is truly the power of God unto salvation has reason not to be ashamed of it; and on all occasions where one is fully conscious of the real evaluation of this fact, he will never be ashamed of it. How could an intelligent person be ashamed of anything that is so great and so powerful? It is that power of God that is unto the salvation of the souls of men. It is that power that is to turn man away from the pleasure of sin to the joy of righteousness. It is that power that changes man’s attitude toward God, changing him from an enemy to a friend and effecting a reconciliation. It is that power of God that will cause man not only to love God but also his fellow men, even his enemies. Yea, it is that power that will beget a man unto a new life, transforming him into a new creature. It is that power that will turn man

out of the way of death and into the way of life. Who can be ashamed of the gospel if he only understands what it is?

Not only are these things and many others accomplished through the gospel of Christ, but they can be accomplished in no other way. Of this fact Peter bore witness in testifying of the Christ when he said, "And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). We should observe that Paul did not say, "the gospel is *a* power of God unto salvation," but, "*the* power of God unto salvation." The gospel of God is not one of the powers, or some of the power of God unto salvation, but *the* power of God unto salvation. Thus there is no other power apart from the gospel which is unto man's salvation. There is no mysterious teaching, neither is there the working of the Holy Spirit for the salvation of the souls of men separate and apart from the gospel.

Since this fact is very vital to the correct understanding of God's plan and also to the right application of it in your life and mine, we shall examine other supporting evidences from the New Testament teaching. In his speech before king Agrippa in relating the story of his conversion, Paul quoted Jesus' commission to him as follows, "But arise, and stand upon thy feet: for to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I sent thee, to open their eyes, that they may

turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me” (Acts 26:16-18). From this statement we see that Paul was sent to open the eyes of the Gentiles that they might turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, and might receive the forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among the sanctified. Thus it is evident that their receiving forgiveness of sins and an inheritance was conditioned upon their turning from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, and that this turning from Satan unto God was dependent upon Paul’s opening their eyes. Their eyes were to be opened that they might turn unto God. How was this to be done? Of this, we do not have to guess, for when Paul wrote to the Corinthians he stated to them what Jesus had sent him to do. “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not in wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made void” (I Cor. 1:17). Paul was given only one commission, hence it is clear that the opening of the eyes of the Gentiles was to be accomplished by preaching to them the gospel. The gospel was God’s power through which their eyes were to be opened.

In speaking of his work of carrying out this commission among the Corinthians whom he describes as, “Them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints” (I Cor. 1:2), Paul wrote, “For though ye have ten thousand tutors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I begat you through the gospel” (I Cor. 4:15). In this statement he used a figure that suggests the real power

of the gospel; it is the power to beget unto a new life, to produce a new creature. Peter used the same figure in his epistle addressed to the elect of a section of Asia Minor, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently: having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth" (I Pet. 1:22-23). James stated the same truth in his letter to the Jews that were scattered abroad. "Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (James 1:18). In fact, the gospel which is the word of God, or the word of truth is the only power by which people are said to be begotten. Since Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3) and since a birth must be preceded by a begetting, and since the gospel is the only power by which people are begotten, and since the gospel must be preached, it is evident that God's plan is unquestionably a preaching plan. Jesus' method is a teaching method.

In writing to Timothy, Paul admonished him, "Be not ashamed therefore of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but suffer hardship with the gospel according to the power of God; who saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal, but hath now been manifested by the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light

through the gospel, whereunto I was appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher" (II Tim. 1:8-11). Here we are told that God has saved according to his own purpose and grace and that this grace was given in Christ before times eternal but that it was manifested (made known to us) by the appearing of Christ, by his abolishing death and bringing life and immortality to light and that this was accomplished through the gospel. So regardless of what sort of an idea one holds in regard to salvation by grace, this statement from Paul that the gospel was the means through which Jesus abolished death and brought life and immortality to light should make it clear that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation and when one rejects the gospel for him death has not been abolished, neither for him has immortality been brought to light; his eyes have not been opened; he is still groping in darkness.

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, for that God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you through our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye were taught, whether by word, or by epistle of ours" (II Thess. 2:13-15). Since God had called them through the gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, had they failed or refused to hear the gospel they would never have believed the truth nor been sanctified in the Spirit and hence would never have been among them

that were chosen. It appears that Paul is here contrasting the Thessalonian people with those that he had mentioned earlier in the chapter of which he said, "They received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved" (II Thess. 2:10). The Thessalonians had believed the truth, had come to love the truth and through the Spirit had been sanctified.

In an earlier letter Paul had already spoken of the election of these people and attributed it to the power of the gospel. "Knowing, brethren beloved of God, your election, how that our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance; even as ye know what manner of men we showed ourselves toward you for your sake" (I Thess. 1:4-5). The gospel had not come to them in word only but in understanding, in meaning, in vital influence. It was accepted by them as the truth in the love of the truth. Care should be exercised to avoid the error of allowing our preconceived ideas about the work of the Holy Spirit or any other notion of a mysterious power to cause us to misunderstand the true power of the gospel. In this statement Paul is not talking about supplemental powers that made the gospel effective but the manner in which it was effective or the evidence that it was effective. The gospel came not in word only but "in power, in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance." This is describing the way the gospel came as evidenced by their, "Work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope" (I Thess. 1:3). They had heard the gospel, believed the gospel, and obeyed the gospel, receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit as promised

by Peter to those who repented and were baptized (Acts 2:38); to those who truly changed their attitude toward God and did works worthy of repentance.

The real power that had worked in the Thessalonians was the power of the gospel or the word of God. "When ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe" (I Thess. 2:13). The brief record of the conversion of the Thessalonians is in full harmony with these ideas. "Paul, as his custom was, went in unto them, and for three sabbath days reasoned with them from the scriptures, opening and alleging that it behoved the Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom, said he, I proclaim unto you, is the Christ. And some of them were persuaded, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few" (Acts 17:2-4). Paul preached the gospel to the people in the synagogue and "some of them were persuaded." This is all in agreement with Jesus' lesson in the parable of the sower. "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the evil one, and snatcheth away that which hath been sown in his heart. This is he that was sown by the way side" (Matt. 13:19). "And he that was sown upon the good ground, this is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; who verily beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" (Matt. 13:23). The failure on the part of the first group was the failure to understand

and the foundation for the success of the last group was the fact that they did understand.

Paul described the salvation of the Ephesians in these words, "In whom ye also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation,—in whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God's own possession, unto the praise of his glory" (Eph. 1:13-14). This was the basis on which they had been chosen from the beginning, and in which they had been called to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ through the gospel. Without the power of the gospel, they would have been without belief of the truth and without the sanctification of the Spirit. We should also observe that the Spirit was spoken of as an evidence of their redemption and not a power that had accomplished it. It is an earnest or pledge of our inheritance. He also informed the Ephesians, "That the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (Eph. 3:6).

Paul expressed a similar idea to the Colossians in these words, "We give thanks to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, having heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have toward all the saints, because of the hope which is laid up for you in the heavens, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel" (Col. 1:3-5). Their faith and love toward all the saints was because of their hope of heaven of which they had learned through the gospel. Paul ap-

pealed to the Philippians to let their lives be worthy of the gospel of Christ. "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ: that, whether I come and see you or be absent, I may hear of your state, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one soul striving for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27). He urged the Colossians not to be moved away from the hope of the gospel. "And you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish and unreprouable before him: if so be that ye continue in the faith, grounded and stedfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye heard, which was preached in all creation under heaven; whereof I Paul was made a minister" (Col. 1:21-23).

He showed the importance of the gospel in warning the Galatians not to pervert it, or to preach another gospel. "I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another gospel: only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, If any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema" (Gal. 1:6-9).

Peter suggested the sovereignty of the gospel by implying the unfortunate condition of those who failed to obey it. "For the time is come for judgment to begin at the

house of God: and if it begin first at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (I Pet. 4: 17). Paul reminded us of the vengeance that will be suffered by those who do not obey the gospel. "And to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might" (II Thess. 1:7-9).

Surely these statements from God's word should give us a conviction that is in agreement with that of the apostle Paul that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

We have learned that not only was the gospel the power by which men's eyes were to be opened that they might turn from the power of Satan unto God, but also the power by which men are begotten, the power through which death was abolished and life and immortality were brought to light, the power through which men believed and were made recipients of the Holy Spirit of promise, the power through which men were called to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, the power through which the Gentiles became fellow-heirs, fellow-members of the body and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus, the power through which men had heard of the hope which is laid up for them in the heavens and that caused them to have love toward all the saints, the power that men should let their lives be worthy of, the

power from which men should not be moved away. The gospel was also not to be perverted, nor were men to fail to obey it under the penalty of eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might.

Then what is the gospel? Paul, the one who has declared it to be the power of God unto salvation has also told us what it is. Having already stated that he was sent to preach the gospel (I Cor. 1:17) Paul said, "We preach Christ crucified" (I Cor. 1:23). Later in the same letter Paul said, "Now I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you, except ye believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures; and that he appeared to Cephas; then, to the twelve; then he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto now, but some are fallen asleep; then he appeared to James; then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to the child untimely born, he appeared to me also" (I Cor. 15:1-8). Thus Paul pointed to the supreme evidences that Jesus is the Son of God as the gospel. He had died, was buried and was raised from the dead according to the scriptures and this had been witnessed by many. The gospel is the simple story of the cross or, "the word of the cross" which is "to them that perish foolishness; but to us who are saved it is the power of God" (I Cor. 1:18).

How can such a simple story provide so great a power? The answer is because it establishes such a great and powerful fact, the fact that Jesus is the Son of God. How can such a simple fact be so great and powerful? How can it be the power of God unto salvation? It is because it is the greatest and most vital fact that has ever come unto the life of man. It is the fact that shows Jesus' teaching to be divine and validates his claim that he spake not from himself but that what he taught came from God. "For I spake not from myself; but the Father that sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak" (John 12:49). When we know that this is true, we know that what he taught is true. Thus this fact supports and establishes a whole system of facts. We know that there is a God of power, of knowledge and wisdom, and of love, a jealous God. We know that man is in sin and stands condemned. We know that life is short and uncertain and is followed by an eternity. We know that those who love and serve God in this life may live in eternal happiness with him but those who do not will be consigned to eternal punishment. Where is the man who has a living conviction that these things are true who will not want, more than anything else, to avoid that eternal punishment and to enjoy eternal life? And where is the man whose nature has not degenerated that keeps those great facts about God alive in his thinking and holds them to be realities who will not be drawn to him as the steel is drawn to the magnet? If, however, these facts do not live within man's heart molding his convictions and attitudes and thus di-

recting his thinking and activities, he is like the substance that lacks the metallic qualities and the pull of the magnet of God's great personality will not be effective in his life. To this man the gospel is without power.

We should recall that Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). "For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1:21). Also we should remember that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). So we see that the gospel only has power with those who believe it, with those who accept it as the truth, with those who come to know God as he is revealed. Paul declared, "For I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day" (II Tim. 1:12). This is that assurance that causes men to leave that which is behind and press on to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus as Paul did. In his prayer to the Father Jesus testified, "And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ" (John 17:3). In this it is clear that eternal life is the result of knowing the true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. This knowledge provides the true motive force that brings one to eternal life. It comes to us through Jesus' teaching as he an-

nounced, "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him" (Matt. 11:27). This is the gospel that Paul preached.

In other words when God prepared his plan for the salvation of man he adjusted it to man's nature and made it such as would become effective through those principles that were made operative with man from the beginning. Why should we not expect God to do this? Why would an all-wise God who made man and imbedded in his nature certain principles by which man's character and action would be controlled ignore these principles in his supreme effort to lead man into the way of righteousness. We have already learned in lesson eighteen that if we control man's thinking we control the man. The great facts of the gospel will control man's thinking and also his actions if he only believes them to be true and accepts them as reality and keeps them alive in his thinking. Herein lies the real power of the gospel. It provides facts that establish values that are so great and so vital to man's own good and happiness that they are irresistible by man's own nature. God has not merely commanded man to put him first but has given man every reason to do so if he only accepts the facts of the gospel. The accepting of these facts to be true, or rejecting them, makes the difference expressed by the apostle Paul. "For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God" (I Cor. 1:18). It is not foolishness to men because they perish, or the

power of God because they are saved, but they perish because by them it was considered foolishness and not accepted, or it was accepted as being true thus becoming the power that opened their eyes and turned them from Satan unto God.

The effectiveness of gospel facts in influencing individuals and directing or controlling their behavior has been illustrated in lessons two, three and four. If one accepts as reality the true description of God's greatness and power, his own nature disposes him to respect, to reverence, and to worship God. If he accepts unquestionably the fact that our God is all-wise and knows all things, he will seek him and trust him. If he has come to understand in any reasonable way the greatness of God's love, his own nature will incline him to love God and to serve him. There are many other facts, related to these which we have considered about Jehovah, which are in keeping with these and complete the system of gospel facts that exert their influence over man and thus become a part of the power of the gospel. A man who knows that he is doomed to spend eternity in hell if he dies in his sin will certainly be moved to do something about it. There is little reason to believe that there are many people who would not, or could not, leave their practices of sin and turn to God if they could truly see the picture as it is. Many people have become slaves to the habit of drink, or to the use of tobacco, and declare that they cannot quit; but when the physician comes and convinces them that they must give up the habit or give up life, the majority of people muster the energy from somewhere,

with or without the aid of friends, to quit the practice that they had followed for years. Yes, in most cases we can do what we want to do, and we will want to serve God if the facts of the gospel are fully accepted.

Since the gospel is God's power unto salvation, and since the power of the gospel becomes effective in the life of a man only through faith in its teachings, and that faith comes through hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17), surely no one could doubt Paul's testimony, "For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1:21). God's plan is truly a teaching, or preaching, plan. May each one recognize this fact and come to understand that if man would be saved he must bring himself under the influence of the great facts of the gospel that through the power of God he may be able to give up his life of sin and become an heir of the righteousness which is through our Lord Jesus Christ.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON 20

1. Why was Paul not ashamed of the gospel?
2. List some things that are accomplished by the gospel that show the greatness of its power.
3. Give evidences that these things can be accomplished in no other way.
4. How was Paul to open the eyes of the Gentiles and what depended upon it?
5. Give cases where this power is referred to under the figure of a "begetting."
6. What did Paul tell Timothy had been destroyed and what had been brought to light through the gospel?

7. Express this teaching in terms which show its personal character.
8. Unto what had the Thessalonians been called through the gospel?
9. What does Paul point out to the Thessalonians as evidence of their election?
10. What did Paul say worked in the Thessalonians?
11. Describe how the Thessalonians were converted to the gospel.
12. Show from Jesus' parable of the sower the importance of the gospel.
13. Show carefully the importance of the gospel to the Ephesians.
14. How had the gospel affected the Colossians?
15. How were the Philippians urged to make their lives worthy of the gospel of Christ?
16. On what conditions would the Colossians be presented holy, without blemish and unreprouable before God?
17. What did Paul say about anyone who would preach another gospel?
18. How did Peter and Paul warn against failing to obey the gospel?
19. Summarize those things that should be accomplished by the power of the gospel.
20. What is the gospel?
21. How can such a simple story provide so great a power?
22. Discuss and illustrate how this power works in the life of a man.
23. With whom does the gospel have this power?
24. What testimony did Jesus give of this power in his prayer to God?
25. Wherein lies the real power of the gospel?
26. Illustrate this from the discussion in lessons two, three and four.
27. What facts about the gospel surely support Paul's testimony that it was "God's good pleasure through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe"?

LESSON 21

THE CAUSE OF MAN'S FAILURE

Why have all men not accepted the gospel? Some people would answer, "Because they are not foreordained unto eternal life." As this expression is generally used, it indicates that man's unwillingness or inability to accept the gospel is in no wise due to any condition or influence within himself that is the result of the operation of principles imbedded in his own nature but due to an unchangable decree of the Almighty. Is this the Bible answer? Is this the cause of man's failure to understand God's teaching, to know God and to be led into the way of eternal life? This is not Paul's answer. Paul wrote, "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that perish: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them" (II Cor. 4:3-4). The gospel was veiled and its light had failed to shine upon the unbelieving because they had been blinded by the god of this world, not by the true God. They had been blinded by the god that they had made for themselves. They had learned to love the things of the world and to seek the glory of men. Jesus showed this to be the trouble among the Jews who rejected him when he asked, "How can ye believe, who receive glory one of another, and the glory that cometh

from the only God ye seek not?" (John 5:44). Yes, the cause for man's failure lies with man and his attitudes toward the things of this world, or in his system of relative values. I will never leave off seeking the glory of men and truly seek the glory of God until I recognize in the glory of God a greater personal value than that which I enjoy in the glory of men. I will never be able to turn away from my own narrow selfishness and bring myself to follow God's plan for me (a life of unselfishness) until I am impelled by a motive that is more powerful than my desire for the glory of men. Our God has graciously and abundantly provided the basis for that motive through the knowledge of himself revealed in his word. As incentives to action he has offered man the greatest personal values conceivable. The only excuse for man's failure to glorify God is to be found in his ignorance of God, his blindness to the great personal values involved, his shortsightedness that causes him to exaggerate the temporal values and minimize or forget the eternal values.

Man's ignorance, blindness, and shortsightedness are the result of man's failure to learn the truth. Without the truth he is without a correct standard for determining values and consequently has accepted a false standard and established a false system of values. Not being acquainted with the divine standard his decisions are based upon human standards. Not knowing the great things of God he has exalted the small things of man. Not knowing the God of the universe he serves the god of this world. Therefore, being thus deceived, he is controlled by earthly things.

So not mere ignorance but deception is the cause of man's failure to turn to God. Deception is that which makes ignorance appear to be knowledge and wisdom to be foolishness. It causes man to think a thing is what it is not. It is a false light that leads man into the darkness. It causes man to accept a thing for what it appears to be rather than what God reveals it to be. It is the limitation upon man's intelligence, the recognition of which would humble him before his Maker. Until he recognizes this limitation he trusts his own wisdom and is exalted in his own conceit; and being blinded to his own ignorance he neglects or rejects the wisdom of God.

This is exactly what happened in the beginning. When the serpent came to Eve he began to direct her thinking to that which would bring her personal enjoyment. "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat" (Gen. 3:6). In his temptation he appealed to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life. These are the very dangers against which the apostle John warned. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (I John 2:15-16). They also operate the same way today as they did with mother Eve. When her thinking was occupied with her selfish

interests, it seems that her consciousness of God and his blessings was overshadowed, her true picture of life was obscured and her sense of values distorted to the extent that she was deceived and in her deception showed her conceit in being willing to follow her own decision instead of the wisdom of God. This is not only evident from the story of Eve's transgression but Paul leaves no doubt in the matter since he tells us, "And Adam was not beguiled, but the woman being beguiled hath fallen into transgression" (I Tim. 2:14). He also warns us of the same danger today through his solicitude for the Corinthians. "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ" (II Cor. 11:3).

Since it was through deception that man was turned away from God surely its danger in keeping man away from God should not be overlooked. Deception is the devil's method. In fact, it is his only method. The Bible indicates no other. It is the process by which man is robbed of the truth and when he is robbed of the truth he has lost his freedom and thus led into bondage. Jesus said, "The truth shall make you free" (John 8:32), and also "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). When man is deceived he is led away from the truth and therefore led away from God. John speaking of the old serpent said, "He that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world" (Rev. 12:9).

Deception is not only the process used by the devil to lead the human family into sin, the one which was suc-

cessful in the beginning, but it is also the process by which evil men shall grow worse and through which they shall continue to lead people into sin. As Paul states, "But evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (II Tim. 3:13). Now let us analyze this process somewhat to discover how it works in the lives of men.

Paul admonishes the Ephesians, "That ye put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, that waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit" (Eph. 4:22). We see here that the old man of sin became corrupt after, or by following the lusts of deceit. What is the meaning of the phrase, "lusts of deceit"? By our usage of the word lust, it has come to mean evil desire, but originally it was not so; and the Greek word which it translates, which was used by the apostle, carries no such implication. It is the same word which Jesus used when he said, "I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15). The apostle Paul also used it when he said, "But I am in a strait betwixt the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ" (Phil. 1:23). What determines whether a desire is evil or good? Is it not the nature of the act to which it leads? If the desire leads to an act which brings only good unto oneself and his fellows, it is a good desire. If, on the other hand, it ultimately brings evil to himself or his fellows, it is an evil desire. In the very nature of the case, desires or lusts of deceit are evil. Man only desires that which he thinks or feels for the moment to be good. Frequently his feeling dominates, and though he would agree that the final outcome of the act would

not be for the best, his strong desire at the moment gives it a temporary value that outweighs other considerations, and thus blinded, he indulges. If, however, he is deceived by his thinking or feeling, then that which he had adjudged to be good, on the contrary will be evil. Hence, if one's desire grows out of deceit, the thing in some way is not what he thinks it is, and so that which he considers for the moment to be good, when properly evaluated, is sure to be evil.

Here is James' description of the subject, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man: but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is fullgrown, bringeth forth death" (Jas. 1:13-15). The first part of the statement completely clears God of any responsibility for man's sin. The second part places the responsibility upon each individual man. Sin which brings forth death is shown to have its beginning in the process described in these words, "when he is drawn away by his own lust." This does not mean to say that all of man's lusts or desires are evil. But that it is through his evil desires that he is drawn away from that which is good. To illustrate, let us consider the sin of adultery, or fornication. What leads one to such a practice? Is it not that he has assigned for the moment a greater value to the enjoyment of a few minutes of fleshly indulgence than he has to decency and uprightness and respectability before God and man? Did he not think things were what they were not? Was it not

a lust of deceit? What about the boy who never has drunk whiskey going out with his gang and getting drunk? He hates the taste of whiskey and also the life of a drunkard. How is he deceived? Why does he even momentarily desire the drink? He does not, but he wants to be one of the gang. He wants to be a regular fellow and his momentary desire is so strong that he pays the price. And what a price!

Since we have seen that only evil desires draw one away from God and into sin, that these evil desires are the product of deception, and that all sin originates this way, now we want to know through what avenue, means or process deception works. We read from Hebrews, "Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God: but exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called To-day; lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:12-13). Here we learn that it is a hardening process, "lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Now for the meaning of this expression let us examine the context carefully. First, we observe that the real warning or admonition being given here is a warning against unbelief. "Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God." Second, we find the example used to impress the warning in the case of the Israelites whose hearts were hardened in the wilderness. "Wherefore, even as the Holy Spirit saith, Today if ye shall hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, Like as in the day

of the trial in the wilderness, Where your fathers tried me by proving me, and saw my works forty years" (Heb. 3:7-9). Third, "And we see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief" (Heb. 3:19). Thus the evil heart of unbelief in the Israelites was due to the hardening of their hearts so that they became impervious to the word of God. The deceitfulness of sin will do just this. Through this process of hardening the heart the deceitfulness of sin gnaws at the very tap root of spiritual life by blinding one to the truth by one's own desires for that which looks good and is not.

That the danger of sin lies in its power to deceive is especially illustrated by the New Testament teaching on the danger of riches. "And Jesus said unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, it is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Matt. 19:23-24). Also, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24). Paul declared, "But they that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (I Tim. 6:9-10). These quotations show the great danger in wealth. The last also indicates wherein the danger lies, "many foolish and

hurtful lusts," "led astray from the faith." Jesus describes this power of riches in his explanation of his parable of the sower. "And he that was sown among the thorns, this is he that heareth the word; and the care of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful" (Matt. 13:22). The power of riches to lead astray lies in their power to deceive. There is nothing more deceitful than riches, since by the use of them so many things can be obtained which men desire; and the wider the range of human desires that it may satisfy, the greater is its power of deception, and the greater its danger in leading men astray.

We sometimes hear a speaker say that sin has nothing to offer. This will only be true in the case of the man who is well fortified against its deceptive values. Whenever sin proposes to satisfy our desire, it is offering us something, real or unreal, and when the time comes that it offers us nothing, we will no longer follow its practices. Then let us not forget that the appeal of any temptation to us is measured directly by our desires relative to it, and that our desires relative to it are determined largely, if not wholly, by our scale of relative values which function in our daily living. Theoretical values which we may have set may not protect us, but those that have become a part of our real life will. A theoretical Christianity may aid but little, but a sincere Christian realism is the shield of faith that will quench all the fiery darts of the evil one.

In his description of the sweeping influence with which the lawless one would come, Paul tells us of man's failure that leaves him open to the power of deception. "And

with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved" (II Thess. 2:10). The "deceit of unrighteousness" has its power with those who receive not "the love of the truth." It is not enough to receive the truth or accept a portion of the truth; one must have the love of the truth. This does not mean love and receive what some man teaches as the truth, but love the truth. Every man who loves the truth will study for himself, especially since so many conflicting ideas are being taught for the truth. And not only so, but he will find joy in following the truth. Unless the truth brings him some joy, he will not love it.

After instructing Titus to admonish the people "to speak evil of no man, not to be contentious, to be gentle, showing all meekness toward all men" (Titus 3:2), Paul adds this reason, "For we also once were foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another" (Titus 3:3). Here it appears that Paul is describing the condition of himself and Titus and probably many others before they came to the knowledge of the truth. He tells us that he was deceived. He likewise implies that the people whom Titus would teach would be troubled with the same condition.

Paul also shows deception to be the root of the trouble among the Galatians when he says, "O foolish Galatians, who did bewitch you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly set forth crucified?" (Gal. 3:1). So effective had the deception been that Paul uses the term "bewitch," attributing to it superhuman power.

Probably one of the greatest evidences of the universal prevalence of deception and the serious danger which accompanies it is to be found in the frequency with which the New Testament teachings warn against it. It is doubtful that any human failing has ever been more universally discussed than has deception. Almost every writer of the New Testament sounds some warning against being deceived. In fact, it is to be found in almost every book of the New Testament. It is probably warned against in more different forms of expression than are used in any other case. Has it been given a similar emphasis in our study and teaching? It would, of course, become tedious if time were taken here to present all of the details, but sufficient time must be taken to cause us to realize that one of our greatest personal dangers is inherent in this element of our own nature. Jesus was keenly aware of this human failing and gave many warnings against it. He knew that the people were going to misunderstand his mission. So in the first part of his wonderful Sermon on the Mount Jesus admonished, "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matt. 5:17). Upon another occasion he warned, "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34). How true were his statements. Many of the Jews to whom he addressed the first one were never able to shake the blindness which came with their deceitful thinking. And many of his disciples, to whom he addressed the second one, are still confusing heavenly peace with earthly peace. Jesus likewise showed how this de-

ceived thinking would cause other difficulties by leading people into practices that should not be followed. "And in praying use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking" (Matt. 6:7). Take heed that no man lead you astray (or mislead you) is another form of the warning given by Jesus (Matt. 24:5). It is also used by John (I John 3:7). Similarly Paul admonished, "Let no man deceive you with empty words" (Eph. 5:6). "Let no man beguile you in any wise" (II Thess. 2:3).

Another form used to express this warning is, "Be not deceived." Paul warned the Galatians (6:7), "Be not deceived; God is not mocked." He wrote, "Or know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor. 6:9-10). And also, "Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals" (I Cor. 15:33).

Probably the most personal form in which the warning is expressed is that against self-deception. John testified, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (I John 1:8). Paul urged, "Let no man deceive himself. If any man thinketh that he is wise among you in this world, let him become a fool, that he may become wise" (I Cor. 3:18). James admonished, "But be ye doers of word, and not hearers only, deluding [or deceiving] your own selves" (Jas. 1:22). He also proclaimed, "If any man thinketh himself to be religious,

while he bridled not his tongue but deceiveth his heart, this man's religion is vain" (Jas. 1:26).

Surely this array of teaching is sufficient to lead every one who is sincere in his religious conviction to recognize the universal danger in deception. Surely the cause of man's failure is fully evident. Surely any sober-minded, intelligent person can see the need for taking every precaution against falling victim to deception. And surely every real precaution against being deceived must find its beginning in a better understanding of God's word. The fact that deception is the result of misguided thinking makes the demand for guidance, the teaching of God's word, imperative. So in the very nature of the case as the New Testament describes it, a teaching or preaching plan is required. "For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1:21).

QUESTIONS ON LESSON 21

1. What answer do some people give to the question "Why have all men not accepted the gospel?"
2. In whom did Paul say the gospel was veiled? Why?
3. What god has blinded the eyes of the unbeliever?
4. What question did Jesus ask to indicate that this was the trouble with the unbelieving Jews?
5. When will one cease to seek the glory of men and seek the glory of God?
6. Where is the only excuse for man's failure to glorify God to be found?
7. Tell how man's failure to learn the truth results in deception.
8. Why do men serve the God of this world?

9. What is the cause of man's failure to turn to God? Explain.
10. What limitation does man need to recognize?
11. In what will he continue until he does recognize it?
12. Illustrate this in the case of Eve.
13. How does Paul warn against the same danger today?
14. What is the devil's method?
15. How did Paul say that the old man became corrupt?
16. What is the basic meaning of lust?
17. Explain how lusts of deceit are always evil.
18. How does James describe the origin of sin in man's life?
19. Illustrate this by the sin of fornication or by the practice of drinking strong drink.
20. Wherein lies the danger of riches or on what is the appeal of any temptation measured?
21. What sort of values will not protect us and what will keep us?
22. What is man's failure that leaves him open to the power of deception?
23. Explain how this works.
24. What reason did Paul give Titus for not being contentious but being gentle and meek?
25. How does Paul suggest the power of deception in his statement to the Galatians?
26. What is probably one of the greatest evidences of the universal prevalence of deception?
27. List the varied expressions used in the New Testament to warn against deception.
28. Where must every real precaution against being deceived find its beginning?
phasizes the need of a teaching plan.
29. Tell why the New Testament teaching on deception em-

AN OPEN LETTER

DEAR READER:

I beg of you that you open your heart to a prayerful consideration of the thoughts presented in the preceding pages; that you open your Bible as a standard by which to measure them; that you open your life to a careful examination and answer for yourself these questions. Am I receiving the Bible teaching as a personal teaching? Have I received the love of the truth into my heart and do I cherish and honor the truth as a message of love that reveals the wisdom of Almighty God? Do I respect his wisdom by seeking its guidance and find joy in complying with his requests as one who loves him with the whole heart? Do I meditate upon the great facts of the gospel that I may bring my life under the influence of its power thus finding strength to bring "every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"? Am I truly seeking to live as one who has been reconciled to God, not forgetting that if one loves God he also loves those whom God loves? Have I come to understand that Christianity is not a mere form of religion demanding that I practice certain things but a philosophy of living that will make me a new creature molded after the likeness of my Lord? Am I fulfilling my mission as a Christian to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth by reflecting the light of the gospel in my daily life?

If, in humility and sincerity, you are pleased with your answers to these questions, I thank God for the progress you have made and beg you to arise to meet the challenge of the crying need of the world today for the gospel in its power. If, however, you are not making an honest effort to do these things, may God have mercy upon you. May you realize that the power you need is to be found only in the gospel, and may you meditate upon its great truths and establish convictions that will bring you joy through faithful service to God.

In sincerity and humility,

J. Ridley Stoop

P.S. This book is an effort to help you. A comment on it, either favorable or adverse, will help me. The second book in this series will be entitled, *How to Inherit Eternal Life*. If you would like an announcement of the pre-publication price when the book is ready, please send your name and address.

