

Victorious Christianity

Teacher's Manual

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Lesson 1

Your Goal as a Christian

I. Introduction

Have you ever given conscious thought to these questions?

- A. What are my personal goals in my relationship to the Lord?
- B. What is my personal vision when it comes to my own spirituality and walk with the Lord?
- C. What kind of a Christian do I want to be?
- D. What do I want to be when I grow up?

Most people have been challenged at some point in their life with the question of career goals. From the time children are very young, parents enjoy asking them the question, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” The answers may change from year to year, but usually the expected answers include such things as a fireman, a nurse, a school teacher, a cowboy, a policeman, an astronaut, a fashion model or a movie star.

These are the normal answers to this question, but they are not totally accurate. These answers reveal possible **career goals**, but they do not necessarily deal with **personal goals**. These answers deal with the question of what someone may want to “do” with their life, but not with what they want to “be” when they grow up.

II. There are different kinds of Christians.

- A. There are non-Christians.

This person is referred to in the Bible as the natural man (I Cor. 2:14).

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

There are several characteristics of the natural man.

1. The natural man lives life as if there was nothing beyond his physical life (I Pet. 4:1-6).

Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the

will of God. 3 For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles--when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. 4 In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. 5 They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 6 For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

- a. This person is primarily concerned about physical and material things.
- b. This person does not live with a sense of accountability to a higher being.
- c. This person's values are temporal and earthly.
- d. This person lives in the seen rather than the unseen world (II Cor. 4:18).

...while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

- e. This person does not believe that there are moral absolutes or standards.
2. The natural man is blind to the truth and things pertaining to God (I Cor. 2:14; II Cor. 4:4; Eph. 4:17-19).

This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

Ephesians 4:17-19

- a. Unfortunately it is hard to convince the natural man to be spiritual.
 - b. It is difficult to persuade someone who values self gratification to live a life of self denial.
 - c. It is difficult to get someone who wants to live by his sexual lusts to live a chaste life.
 - d. It is difficult to persuade someone who lives to amass personal wealth to be generous.
3. The natural man lives as if he is the center of the universe. Therefore, all of the decisions of the natural man are based on how things affect him personally.

B. There are baby Christians (I Cor. 3:1).

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.

Babes in Christ are those who have newly accepted Christ as their personal Savior and Lord. These are those who have not fully separated themselves unto God and are in a process. Their actual state is similar to the carnal Christian listed next.

C. There are carnal Christians (I Cor. 3:1-4; Eph. 4:17; Heb. 5:12).

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. 2 I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; 3 for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? 4 For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal? I Corinthians 3:1-4

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. Hebrews 5:12

Carnal Christians are those who have accepted Christ and who consider themselves to be Christians but who continue to live life like the natural man. The churches to which Paul wrote were filled with these kinds of Christians. He made reference to many types of sinful or immature behavior among those who claimed to be Christian. Some of these include the following:

1. Disobedience (Rom. 6:1-2)
2. Hypocrisy (Rom. 12:9-21)
3. Strife (I Cor. 1:11; 3:3; II Cor. 12:20)
4. Envy (I Cor. 3:3; II Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:26)
5. Division or Partisan Spirit (I Cor. 1:10; 3:3-4; Tit.3:11)
6. Sexual Immorality (I Cor. 5:1; 6:9; II Cor. 12:21; Eph. 5:3)
7. Drunkenness (I Cor. 5:11; 6:10; Eph. 5:18)
8. Swindling (I Cor. 5:11, NLT; 6:10)
9. Covetous (I Cor. 5:11)
10. Reviling (I Cor. 5:11; 6:10)
11. Evil Associations (I Cor. 15:33; II Cor. 6:11-18; Eph. 5:11)
12. Outbursts of Anger (II Cor. 12:20)
13. Selfish Ambition (II Cor. 12:20)
14. Backstabbing, Whispering and Gossip (II Cor. 12:20; Eph. 4:29)
15. Disorderly Behavior (II Cor. 12:20; II Th. 3:6)
16. Lying (Eph. 4:25)
17. Idleness (Eph. 4:28; II Th. 3:10-11)

- 18. Filthiness (Jam. 1:21)
- 19. Wickedness (Jam. 1:21)
- 20. Works of the Flesh (Gal. 5:16-21)

These are Christian people who “behave like mere men” (I Cor. 3:4). They may even excuse their behavior by saying, “I am only human!” They claim to be Christians but they walk as enemies of the cross (Phil. 3:18-19).

For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame--who set their mind on earthly things.

- D. There are mature Christians (I Cor. 2:6; 14:20; Phil. 3:15; Heb. 5:14).

Solid food is for those who are mature, who have trained themselves to recognize the difference between right and wrong and then do what is right. Hebrews 5:14

This person is referred to in the Bible as the spiritual man (I Cor. 2:15). Mature or spiritual persons also have certain qualities about them.

- 1. They walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16).
- 2. They walk as children of the light (Eph. 5:8).
- 3. They manifest the fruit of the Spirit in their lives (Gal. 5:22-24).

Every human being is going to grow up (in the biological sense), but this does not mean that every human being is going to attain maturity. Maturity, by God’s definition, implies more than just being full of years or of full physical stature.

Maturity by God’s definition implies that a person has come to a place where the fruit of the Spirit in his or her life has become so complete that it can be pleurably enjoyed by others.

In society we have such a sad concept of maturity. One can drive by a theater today and be confronted with a marquee stating, “Unbridled Lust, Uncensored and Uncut, For Mature Audiences Only.” These are things that appeal to “immature, adult” audiences. True maturity is never “unbridled” or out of control. True maturity is perfect self control.

It is tragically possible for people to grow up biologically but never mature or come to the fullness of what God intended for them when He made them. We are constantly reading about people who started strong but ended in disaster because of moral weakness. How does this happen? What went wrong?

For many of these people, their life went sour because they had a misplaced emphasis. Their emphasis was constantly on, “What am I going to do? What career am I going to pursue? Am I reaching my career goals? What can I do to get timely

promotions? How can I build financial security for myself and my family?” None of these questions are wrong in themselves, but they are not to be the foundation on which our lives are built. They are not to be the things for which we work the hardest.

There is a more important question, “What am I going to **be** when I grow up?” That is, what kind of person am I going to be? What character qualities am I going to possess? What kind of Christian will I be? This is foundational to whatever else I will do with my life.

III. The Bible often makes a comparison between two paths.

See: Psalm 1 and Jeremiah 17:5-8

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish. Psalm 1:1-6

Thus says the LORD: “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the LORD. For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when good comes, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land which is not inhabited. Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is the LORD. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit. Jeremiah 17:5-8

Notice the biblical comparison of the spiritual man and the natural man—the godly and the ungodly.

Godly—Spiritual	Ungodly—Natural
They do not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, that is, they walk in the ways of the Lord (Hos. 14:9) according to the Spirit (Rom. 8:4). These individuals will stand (Pro. 19:21).	They walk in the counsel of the ungodly and thus are doomed to fail (Pro. 14:12; 16:25).
They do not stand in the way of sinners. They walk in the way of the Lord and	They refuse to stand in the way of the Lord, but are walking on the way that

find rest for their souls (Jer. 6:16). These stand in the Gospel (I Cor. 15:1).	leads to destruction (Jer. 6:16; Mt. 7:13).
They do not sit in the seat of the scornful, but they have been raised to sit with Christ in heavenly places (Eph. 2:6-7).	They sit in the seat of the scornful and become mockers of that which is true (Jude 1:18).
They delight in the law of the Lord. His law is found in their hearts (Is. 51:7).	They are rebellious and refuse to listen to the law of the Lord (Is. 30:9).
They meditate in the law of the Lord day and night. Their motivation is that of love for God and His word (Ps. 119:97).	They despise the law of the Lord and they will suffer doom as a result (Amos 2:4).
They are like trees planted by the river of water which bring forth good fruit (Ps. 92:13-14; Mt. 13:23).	They are like a dry bush in the desert (Jer. 17:6) which bring forth rotten fruit (Mt. 12:33).
Their leaves do not wither because God sustains them through every trial (Jer. 17:8).	Their leaves fade away (Is. 1:30; Ps. 37:1-2).
They will prosper in whatever they do (Ps. 122:6).	They will not prosper in the end (Jer. 10:21).
They are like wheat (Mt. 13:25).	They are like chaff. They are useless. They will be separated and burned (Mt. 3:12).
They are firmly rooted in the Word of God.	They have no root and are driven by the wind (Eph. 4:14).
They will stand on judgment day (Ps. 11:7).	They will not be able to stand before a holy God (Ps. 5:5).
They will remain forever (Rev. 7:15-17).	They will perish.

IV. It is good to have goals as a Christian.

What kind of a Christian do I want to be?

Many people have career goals but very few people have personal character goals or goals as a Christian, and yet, these personal areas are the things that will shape and mold everything we will do. These are the things that will cause each of us to make a lasting impact on our generation. Do you have any goals as a Christian? Do you have a target that you are aiming at in your Christian life? What kind of Christian do you want to be?

For myself, I have some goals as a Christian. They can be summarized in the following six areas.

- A. I want to be the kind of Christian that God can use for His purposes.

God does indeed have a plan for all of our lives, but if we fail to be the good and faithful servants that He wants us to be, we can be left on the shelf because we have not made ourselves ready or fit for the Master's use. God intended us to be a vessel of honor, but because of choices that we make we can become a vessel of dishonor (II Tim. 2:20-21).

But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.

- B. I want to be mature enough to weather the storms of life.

Being a mature Christian does not exempt anyone from the storms of life. It rains on the just and the unjust. But I want to be the kind of Christian that is not blown over or canceled out by the trials of life that come everyone's way. I want my faith to stand in the good times and the bad times (Job 4:18-20).

If He puts no trust in His servants, if He charges His angels with error, how much more those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, who are crushed before a moth? They are broken in pieces from morning till evening; they perish forever, with no one regarding.

- C. I want to be the type of Christian that others can follow.

Paul encouraged his friends to follow him as he followed the Lord. I want my life to be an example that my children, grandchildren and associates can feel good about. We are all an example of one kind or another. I want to provide a positive pattern for others to follow—a pattern that will lead other to life (I Cor. 11:1).

Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

- D. I want to be a true reflection of Christ to the world (II Cor. 3:2-3).

The word "Christian" means a follower of Christ. I realize that the only Christ that people will see is the Christ that comes through the human vessels that He has touched and filled with His Spirit. What kind of image of Christ am I portraying to the world? Will people truly see the true Jesus in me at work, at home, in the marketplace as well as in the church?

You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.

- E. I want to be a Christian who is not consumed with satisfying my own needs but who is a true servant to the needs of others (Mark 10:44-45).

I want to be like Jesus who did not come to be served but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many.

And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

- F. I want to be a Christian who genuinely senses God's anointing on my life (II Th. 1:11-12).

I want to believe that each day I am an ambassador for Christ and that what I do not only has His blessing on it, but I want to feel His anointing on it. Like the runner in the movie "Chariots of Fire" I want to feel His pleasure when I run for Him.

Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

What kind of Christian do you want to be? It is never too late to ask that question. Go ahead and set some personal, character goals. Write them on a piece of paper. Put them in a prominent place on your life. Ask God daily to help you achieve success in these areas. I am convinced that with the help of the Holy Spirit and the grace of God in our lives we can move toward those God-pleasing goals.

Lesson 2

A Life Based on a Solid Foundation

The experience of salvation in a person's life is meant to be a radical event where they are translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. Often times what is promoted as a person "coming to Christ" is not that way at all.

Part of the reason for this could be that we are not presenting the Gospel in a way that demands a radical response and a radical change. Many people who come to the Lord do not change that much and seem to drag most of their problems with them for many years to come.

The Gospel and the cross of Christ have more power than that. So the problem, if there is one, cannot be in the plan of salvation as presented in the Scripture. The problem must be in how we are preaching the Gospel.

When people are brought into the kingdom properly they will experience a major change in their life. If we preach a Gospel that makes no demands, people will make little response. Many problems that Christians face should have been dealt with in conjunction with their conversion. Most of the counseling that goes on in the pastor's office is over issues that should have been settled when they made Jesus the Lord of their life.

I. Before building a life there must be a strong foundation.

A. Our foundation must be God's and not man's.

Ask Class: What are some of the things that your average person in the world would say is sure or that provides security in the day of trouble. Some answers that you may get include: gold, diamonds, life insurance, stocks and bonds, retirement fund, food storage, underground bomb shelter, etc.

1. Man's foundation is shaky (Job 4:18-20; 22:15-16).

If He puts no trust in His servants, if He charges His angels with error, how much more those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, who are crushed before a moth? They are broken in pieces from morning till evening; they perish forever, with no one regarding. Job 4:18-20

This foundation is "in the dust." This is an earthly foundation that offers little or no security. This is a house of cards just waiting for the smallest thing to blow it over. Man's foundation is equal to no foundation (Luke 6:49).

2. God's foundation is sure (II Tim. 2:19; Pro. 10:25).

Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." II Timothy 2:19

When the whirlwind passes by, the wicked is no more, but the righteous has an everlasting foundation. Proverbs 10:25

When the whirlwind passes, the wicked are no more, but the [uncompromisingly] righteous have an everlasting foundation. –Amp

The foundation of God is a sure and everlasting foundation. There are some buildings that you can look at and you just get the sense that they are solid. There are people like this. They are steady, solid and stable.

B. Our foundation is the rock, Christ Jesus (Rom. 15:20; I Cor. 3:9-11).

And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation... Romans 15:20

For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. I Corinthians 3:9-11

1. He is a Rock of Offense and a Stone of Stumbling (Rom. 9:33).

As it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." Romans 9:33

2. He is the stone that the builders rejected (Acts 4:11-12; Ps. 118:22-23).

This is the "stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone." Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. Acts 4:11-12

It is easy to reject the foundation stone when it does not come to us in a way that we want it to come. We can be offended in the process of building our lives. Christ will either be a stumbling stone or a stepping stone in our building process.

3. We are blessed if we are not offended in Him (Luke 7:23; John 16:1).

And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me. Luke 7:23

The word "offended" means "to stumble or to be tripped up." The word of God is

often confrontational. If we are not careful we will trip over it. Jesus said some hard things to people for their own good. But some were offended at His words and ceased from following Him (John 6:60-66).

The foundation stone of Christ is properly laid when the principles of the doctrine of Christ are effectively operating in our lives (Heb. 6:1-3).

Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits.

Before we can build on this foundation and go on in our Christian life we need to get a building “permit.” God will not issue the permit if we have been negligent in establishing a proper foundation.

C. Our foundation is the most important part of the building (Ps. 11:3).

If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? Psalm 11:3

The foundation of anything is the most important part. When you buy a house, you do not worry so much about the minor things, but you check the foundation carefully. A damaged foundation can cause you to lose your whole house. On the other hand, a good foundation will be a great help to the Christian life.

1. It will enable one to weather the storms of life (Mt. 7:25; Col. 2:8; I Tim. 6:19). We never know what the future holds. As a result there is no way to anticipate how strong or secure our foundation needs to be.

...and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. Matthew 7:25

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. Colossians 2:8

2. It will help establish one in the faith (Col. 2:6-7).

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. Colossians 2:7

D. Our foundation will be very costly (Luke 14:28-30).

For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it--lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, "This man began to build and was not able to finish." Luke 14:28-30

1. It involves a cross experience (Luke 14:27).

And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

2. It involves a denial of self (Mark 8:34-38).

When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

3. It involves a digging deep (Luke 6:48). This means removing everything that separates you from the Rock.

He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock.

4. It involves losing your soul-life (Mark 8:35).

For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it.

5. It involves a surrender of all of life's possessions (Luke 18:22-23). There can be no first but Jesus.

So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich.

Mark's Gospel says, "Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him..." Even though Jesus loved Him He could not make it any easier for the rich man if he was to indeed lay the right foundation in his life.

There can be no first but Jesus. Anything that we hold above our relationship to the Lord is a form of idolatry. Is there anything in your life that you could not

give up if God asked for it? This includes but is not limited to some of the following:

- Certain possessions (car, clothing items, home, etc.)
- Certain activities (hobbies, alcohol, entertainment, career, etc.)
- Certain friends relatives and associates

6. It involves being broken (Mt. 21:42-44).

Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes’? Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.”

7. It involves a total love for God (Luke 14:26).

If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.

How deep is your love for the Lord? Is it really your highest relationship (Mt. 10:37)?

8. It involves a continual pressing on toward the mark (Luke 9:62).

But Jesus said to him, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

Laying a good foundation in our life is not just a time commitment, it is a life commitment.

As costly as this all seems, nothing is ever really a sacrifice, because what God asks us to give up for Him is not worthy to be compared to what He gives us back in return (Luke 18:28-30; Rom. 8:18; II Cor. 4:16-18).

Then Peter said, “See, we have left all and followed You.” So He said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life.” Luke 18:28-30

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Romans 8:18

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

II Corinthians 4:16-18

Lesson 3-4

Based on Hearing and Doing

I. **The foundation of our Christian life is based on the principle of hearing and doing.**

A. This is seen in Jesus' parable of the builders (Mt. 7:24-27; Luke 6:46-49).

Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall. Matthew 7:24-27

But why do you call Me "Lord, Lord," and not do the things which I say? Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great.

Luke 6:46-49

These two builders represent all those who find themselves in a place of hearing the word of God. The parable is not about believers and unbelievers. It represents two types of believers. They are both in the process of building a house which represents their life.

1. There are many similarities between the two builders. Notice the things that the two builders have in common:
 - a. Both men were hearers of the Word.
 - b. Both men were in a building process.
 - c. Both men completed their houses.
 - d. Both houses looked fine from the outside.
 - e. Both builders experienced the rain, the floods and the winds.
2. There are many apparent advantages that the foolish man enjoyed.
 - a. The foolish man seemed to get a quicker start.
 - b. The foolish man had an easier task (the easy way).

- c. The foolish man lived in his house sooner.
 - d. The foolish man's house did not cost as much to build.
3. There was a difference in the way the wise man built.
- a. The wise man dug deep (cleaned out everything).
 - b. The wise man built on an unshakable foundation.
 - c. The wise man did not care how long it took.
 - d. The wise man was willing to pay the price.
 - e. The wise man did not bypass important steps in the process.
4. There was a great difference in the result of the building process.

When the rain, winds and floods reached a critical intensity...

- a. The foolish man's house immediately fell and great was the fall of it.
- b. The wise man's house was not shaken but stood through the storm.
- c. The moral of the story: It is cheaper to build right the first time.

B. This is seen in Jesus parable of the sower (Mt. 13:3-9; 19-23).

We will come back to this later.

II. Not every person who calls themselves a Christian has this foundation in place.

A. There are many who know what to do, but do not do it (Rom. 1:32; Mt. 23:1-4).

Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them. Romans 1:32, NIV

Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." Matthew 23:1-4

B. There are many who have ears but do not hear (Mt. 13:10-14).

The disciples were having trouble figuring out why Jesus changed His style of teaching. Up to this time all of His teaching was very clear. Now He started teaching

in parables where the truth was hidden. When you study this passage and the context, it is clear that the religious leaders were not open to Jesus' teaching. They had now accused Jesus of having a demon and doing His work under the inspiration of Satan. Jesus warned the religious leaders about committing the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit and then changed His manner of teaching.

And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive...'

- C. Those that have ears are instructed to hear (Mt. 13:9; Rev. 2:2, 11, 17, 29; 3:3, 6, 13, 22).

He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

Jesus is reminding us that we all have two sets of ears. We have natural ears and we have spiritual ears. As far as God is concerned we have not heard spiritually until we have acted upon that which we have heard.

III. There are four different types of hearers as described by Jesus.

Jesus described four different types of hearers by the four different kinds of soil in the parable of the sower. The seed represents the Word of God and the soil represents our heart condition.

A. The Wayside Hearer

1. The natural illustration (Mt. 13:4)

And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them.

Seed was sown on a pathway where the ground was hard. The seed stayed on the hard surface and became very vulnerable to the birds of the air eating it before it had a chance to take root.

2. The spiritual meaning (Mt. 13:19)

When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.

Those who have this type of heart can be described this way. These are those who...

- Once were open and soft before the Lord.
- Experienced things that trampled them under foot.
- Became hard and unreceptive.
- Now only listen to the Word in a surface way (on heart but not in heart)
- Lose the seed.
- Bear no resulting fruit.

B. The Stony Ground Hearer

1. The natural illustration (Mt. 13:5-6)

Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away.

There is some ground that is very rocky and what soil does exist is very shallow. As a result the roots cannot go down deep to where the moisture is and as soon as things heat up, they wither and eventually die.

2. The spiritual meaning (Mt. 13:20-21)

But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.

Those who have this type of heart can be described this way. These are those who...

- Failed to clear the ground before planting.
- Kept some hard, unproductive areas in heart.
- Have shallow soil whose experience is based mostly on emotion (received with joy).
- Do not have deep roots and a strong foundation.
- Have many obstacles to personal growth.
- Cannot endure the heat of trials and tests.
- Bear no fruit.

C. The Thorny Ground Hearer

1. The natural illustration (Mt. 13:7)

And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them.

The thing about weeds is that you do not have to want them or plant them. In addition, they always seem to be large, overspreading plants that block sunlight from the desirable plants. They also have a tap root that is very long and can get moisture when other plants cannot. If you look at a dry patch of land, often it is only the weeds that are green.

2. The spiritual meaning (Mt. 13:22)

Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.

Those who have this type of heart can be described this way. These are those who...

- Have too much other stuff growing in their lives.
- Have too much competition for the good seed.
- Have lots of activities that fill all of their time, use all of the talents and demand much of their treasure.
- Bear no fruit.

D. The Good Ground Hearer

1. The natural illustration (Mt. 13:8)

But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

Even in good ground where the soil has been properly prepared, there are levels of productivity.

2. The spiritual meaning (Mt. 13:23)

But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

Those who have this type of heart can be described this way. These are those who...

- Hear the word and accept it (Mark 4:20).

- Hear the word and understand it (Mt. 13:23).
- Hear the word and keep it (Luke 8:15)
- Bear fruit in their lives.

But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience. Luke 8:15

We all control the ground of our hearts. We must prepare it as Ezra did (Ezra 7:10).

For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.

IV. How we respond to the commands of Christ indicates our relationship to Him.

What kind of relationship do you have to Jesus? Is He your friend? Is He your brother? Is He your personal servant? The way you see the relationship has a huge bearing on how you respond to His voice.

A. It should be a relationship of love (John 14:15).

If you love Me, keep My commandments. John 14:15

B. It should be a relationship of sheep to shepherd (John 10:26-28; Luke 7:8).

But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

John 10:26-28

C. It should be a relationship of lordship and obedience (Mt. 8:8-10; Luke 6:46; 7:8).

The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!"
Matthew 8:8-10

But why do you call Me "Lord, Lord," and not do the things which I say? Luke 6:46

D. It should be a relationship of discipleship (Mt. 21:6; 26:19; Luke 9:15).

So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. Matthew 21:6

The greatest thing that can be said of a disciple is that they followed the wishes of their master and did what he asked.

All of these relationships should inspire us to be “swift to hear” (Jam. 1:19). How do you hear quickly? You hear quickly by responding quickly to what the Lord is saying.

So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath...

V. To neglect to lay this foundation is the height of folly and deception (Jam. 1:22-25).

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

When we only hear the word but do not put the word into practice...

- We deceive ourselves (We think that knowing is the same as doing).
- We forget the word easily.
- We do not receive the blessing of obedience to the word.

VI. There are benefits and privileges for those who are both hearers and doers of the word.

A. They live “blessed” lives (Mt. 24:46; Luke 11:27-28; 12:43).

And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, “Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You! But He said, “More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” Luke 11:27-28

The word “blessed” means “fortunate, well-off and happy.” It denotes the transcendent happiness of a life beyond care, labor and death (Kittle). It can also mean “rich.” It speaks of those who are much to be envied, who live above the cares of others and who are favored with a happy destiny.

B. They receive special instruction and insight from the Lord (Luke 6:27; Mt. 13:16-17).

But I say to you who hear... Luke 6:27

Jesus has special instructions for those who have an ear to hear. He lets them in on His special secrets (I Th. 5:4). As such they are protected from the winds of doctrine that blow on the earth (John 7:17).

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

- C. They are considered His closest friends (John 15:13-15).

Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.

Abraham was call a friend of God (Jam. 2:23). We have that same opportunity to be a friend of God. We cannot be God's friend or walk with God unless we are in agreement with His words in our life (Amos 3:3).

- D. They are placed in the same category as His mother and brothers (Mt. 12:50; Mark 3:35; Luke 8:19-21).

Then His mother and brothers came to Him, and could not approach Him because of the crowd. And it was told Him by some, who said, "Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see You." But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."

Luke 8:19-21

The natural relationships that are described in this passage are the closest of all human relationships. Yet Jesus said that if we are hearers and doers of the word of God we have a closer relationship to Him than even that of His mother and brothers.

- E. They find a place of safety, security and protection in His fold (John 10:26-28; I John 2:15-17).

But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

John 10:26-28

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

VII. The hearing and the doing of the word of God is the sure foundation.

Because this area is so critical to the success of the Christian, it is good to do things that will assist you to both hear and do what the Lord is saying to you. Try doing the following. Take a clean sheet of paper and make four columns (See Sample). Carry this in your Bible and keep it with you in your prayer times. Record the things that God says and the date. On the other side of the page keep record of what you have done about it and the date that you accomplished it. Review this list often.

Most Christians hear God more than they realize. But too often they are forgetful hearers of the word. Writing things down helps us to remember them.

What the Lord Said	Date	What I Have Done About It	Date

VIII. The Conclusion of the Matter

Jesus was at a wedding in Cana. It looked like the host was going to be embarrassed for his lack of preparation. There was a general sense of panic. The servants were unsure as what to do. They eventually shared their concern with Mary who gave them the greatest piece of advice that anyone could give.

She pointed them to Jesus and said, “Whatever He says to you, do it” (John 2:5).

Wiser words were never spoken! If you want a great life, if you want a life built on the rock, if you want to reach your God-appointed destiny, you must follow Mary’s advice, “Whatever He says to you, do it.”

Perhaps it would be good to make a covenant of obedience as the children of Israel did under the leadership of Nehemiah (Neh. 10:28-29).

*Now the rest of the people--the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the Nethinim, and all those who had separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the Law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, everyone who had knowledge and understanding--these joined with their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse and an oath **to walk in** God’s Law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and **to observe and do** all the commandments of the LORD our Lord, and His ordinances and His statutes...*

Lesson 5-9

Christianity Based on True Repentance

I. **Before going on in our walk with the Lord there must be a proper Christian birth experience (Acts 2:37-40).**

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation."

Peter preached a powerful message on the day of Pentecost after the ascension of Jesus into heaven. Along with that message there was a powerful response from the people. They were cut to the heart (that is, under a deep conviction of the Holy Spirit) and they asked the question that we all must ask in response to the moving of the Holy Spirit in our lives, "What shall we do?"

In other words, "In light of what Christ has done and what we have done, what should be our response?"

Peter gave them four things that were going to be critical for them in starting out their new walk with Jesus Christ as their Lord.

A. The people were to repent.

1. They had one way of thinking about Jesus and they were to change their thinking.
2. They were going one direction and now they were to turn around and go another direction.
3. They had one mindset concerning God, self and sin and they were to change their mindset to conform to God's mindset (world view).

B. The people were to be baptized in water.

Just as the Children of Israel went through the Red Sea and became separated from the slavery that they had experienced under Pharaoh (I Cor. 10:1-4), the people were to be baptized in water as a way to experience freedom from the slavery of sin (Rom. 6:1-7).

C. The people were to be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit would be important if they were going to have the supernatural power that they needed to fulfill the commands of Christ.

- D. The people were to spiritually separate themselves from the wickedness of their generation.

The people were to enter into a new kingdom with a whole new set of principles. Their lives would be changed. They would be in the world, but not of the world. They would be living on the earth, but they would not be subject to the world system or way of doing things.

These four things were Peter's answer to the question from the crowd about what to do in response to the conviction of the Holy Spirit in the lives of these individuals. These were not extremely bad individuals who needed to clean up their lives. These were God fearing people who wanted to move to the next level in their lives (Acts 2:5).

This was not the path that Peter laid out for those who wanted to simply go deeper in their relationship to the Lord, this was the path for anyone who wanted to be born again and who wanted to follow the Lord as a Christian.

Peter did not present two levels of Christianity. What he gave them was the basic minimum for anyone to get a proper start into their experience of Christianity.

All too often we have separated these experiences (sometimes by years) in the life of believers. That is not the way God intended. That is not the way to start out on one's Christian journey. We must begin our Christian life with all of the equipment that we need to make it a successful climb (Example of a mountain climber preparing for a climb, trying to climb without the needed equipment, climbing for a while, realizing the need and then going back down to get something. Then repeating the same process several times. He will never get to the top of the mountain.).

Peter did not mince words with the people when they asked the question. He was direct and bold. He understood that people are open when the Holy Spirit is upon them. He was willing to give them the whole package—repent, believe, be baptized in water, receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and separate yourselves from this twisted generation!

We will talk more about all of these things later. Right now we want to look at the first thing that Peter instructed them to do—"Repent!"

II. Having a proper Christian birth experience involves experiencing true repentance.

You will notice that I said "experiencing" true repentance. We are not talking about accepting a doctrinal position relative to repentance. We are talking about a genuine

experience that changes us to the core.

A. Repentance is the first word of the Gospel.

1. It was the first word preached by John the Baptist (Mt. 3:2).

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!

2. It was the first word preached by Jesus (Mt. 4:17).

From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

3. It was the first word preached by the disciples (Mark 6:12).

So they went out and preached that people should repent.

4. Jesus told His disciples near his departure that "repentance" was to be preached in the entire world (Luke 24:46-47).

Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

5. It was the main message on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38).

6. It was the focus of Paul's preaching in the Book of Acts (Acts 26:18-21).

And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

7. It is an experience that is for everyone everywhere (Acts 17:30-31; II Pet. 3:9).

Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead. Acts 17:30-31

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. II Peter 3:9

How often do we use the word “repent” when we pray for someone to come to Christ? How often do we even bring up the “sin” issue and make any demands of people at all? Are we making it too easy for people to get saved? Where do we get the notion that all we have to do to come to Christ is ask Jesus to come into our hearts?

B. Repentance is to be our first response to the Gospel (Rev. 2:5; 21-22; 3:3, 19-20).

Actually repentance should be the part of every believer’s life for their entire life. Every time that the Lord speaks to us and calls us to change anything about our lives, we are challenged to repent. Repentance is not a one-time experience.

Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place--unless you repent. Revelation 2:5

C. It is important to know what repentance is not.

1. Repentance is not the same as conviction of sin (Acts 24:24-25).

It is possible to even tremble with conviction of sin, but if that conviction does not lead to some response called “repentance,” it means nothing.

And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, “Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.”
Acts 24:24-25

2. Repentance is not the same as worldly sorrow or feeling bad about something (II Cor. 7:10).

Worldly sorrow is being sorry for getting caught or being sorry for the consequences that resulted from what we have done. Without true repentance and given the same set of circumstances a person will most likely repeat his or her past sins.

For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. II Corinthians 7:10

3. Repentance is not the same as reformation.

It is not “turning over a new leaf.” It is not making a list of New Years’ resolutions that are attempted through will power and personal discipline.

New Year's resolutions usually fail because there is no true inward change, only an outward conformity. You can clean up a pig and put a bowtie on it, but when left to itself it will return to the mud. There must be a change of the inner nature of man if success is going to be achieved. What are you when no one else is around? You are no more a Christian than what you are when no one else is around to watch you.

4. Repentance is not the same as being religious.

It is not going to church, celebrating church festivals, tithing, giving to the poor, etc. The Pharisees were extremely religious. They tithed, they fasted, they gave to the poor, they prayed often, they knew the Scriptures, they were full of good works and they were even evangelistically minded (Matthew 23). They did all of these things, yet John and Jesus both called them to repentance (Mt. 3:7-10).

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." Matthew 3:7-10

Jesus said that our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (Mt. 5:20). He is not just looking for a change to take place in the external aspects of our lives. He wants an internal change.

For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:20

5. Repentance is not the same as mental faith.

Mental faith is subscribing to a creed or doctrinal statement. In its most generic sense someone could say, "I believe the Bible" or "I believe in God" or "I believe what the church believes." Many people declare that they believe in God or that they believe in Jesus. But have those same people made Him the Lord of their lives?

You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe--and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? James 2:19-20

C. It is important to know what repentance is.

1. Charles Finney defined repentance this way: "It implies an intellectual and a

hearty giving up of all controversy with God upon each and every point. It implies a conviction that God is wholly right, and the sinner wholly wrong, and a thorough and hearty abandonment of all excuses and apologies for sin.”

Have you made this important decision before God? Have you settled the fact that when you and God disagree about something that God is always right?

2. Oswald Chalmers defined repentance this way: “It describes that deep and radical change whereby a sinner turns from the idols of self and sin unto God, and devotes every movement of the inner and outer man to the captivity of His obedience.”

3. Alan Richardson in his *Theological Word Book of the Bible* says this about repentance:

“It means much more than a mere change of mind though it includes this; it represents a reorientation of one’s whole life and personality, which includes the adoption of a new ethical line of conduct, a forsaking of sin and a turning to righteousness.”

4. The concept of repentance is found in both the Old and the New Testament.

- a. In the Old Testament

- i. The word for “repentance” in the Old Testament means to pant, to sigh, to groan, to lament or to grieve about one’s doings.

One way to visualize the sighing that might be associated with repentance is demonstrated in the children’s game “Pin the Tail on the Donkey.” Imagine being blindfolded and dizzy from spinning. After attempting to “pin the tail on the donkey” the blindfolds are removed. When you can now see, you realize how far short you were from the intended target. You groan or sigh.

What is it like to make our life decisions in absolute darkness?

- ii. It is often associated with words such as “turn” or “return.”
- iii. It has a great deal to do with an external act on the part of the person doing the repenting (e.g. sackcloth and ashes).

- b. In the New Testament

Jesus made the law internal.

- i. The Greek word most often used in the New Testament for “repentance”

means to change one's mind or purpose.

- ii. This has to do with an internal change. The internal change must precede the external change. If there is internal change there will be external change as well.
- iii. Arndt Gingrich in his Greek Lexicon states this, "The Greek word, which the English Bible translates repentance, signifies 'change of heart.' The sinner must realize the truly damnable character of his wrongdoings and his own helplessness, and then must, through faith, seek refuge in the wounds of the Saviour."

5. Repentance involves a losing of the soul-life—the mind, will and emotions (the three realms of the soul).

When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it." Mark 8:34-35

- a. Repentance has implications relative to the mind of man.

"To repent means to change one's mind, thought, purpose, views regarding a matter; it is to have another mind about a thing" (*The Great Doctrines of the Bible*, William Evans).

- i. The Bible teaches that man's mind outside of Christ is...

- Corrupt and destitute of the truth (I Tim. 6:5).
- Defiled (Tit. 1:15).
- Blinded (II Cor. 3:14; 4:4).
- An enemy of God (Col. 1:21).
- Carnal (Rom. 8:6-7).
- Futile (Eph. 4:17).
- Set on earthly things (Phil 3:19).
- Void of judgment (Rom. 1:28).
- In need of renewal (Rom 12:2).

With the Lord's authority let me say this: Live no longer as the ungodly do, for they are hopelessly confused. Their closed minds are full of darkness; they are far away from the life of God because they have shut their minds and hardened their hearts against him. They don't care anymore about right and wrong, and they have given themselves over to immoral ways. Their lives are filled with all kinds of impurity and greed. But that isn't what you were taught when you learned about Christ.

Ephesians 4:17-20, NLT

None of us like to think of ourselves in these terms, but we are deceived if we think otherwise. This is God's perspective of man's mind apart from Christ.

- ii. Peter called on the people to change their thinking about Christ. You used to think one way, now I want you to reevaluate and begin to think another way about Jesus.
- iii. As we come to Christ in repentance, God wants to renew our minds (Rom. 12:2).

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

- iv. As we come to Christ we need to change our mind or have another mind about many things including God, man and sin.
 - God is love, but He is also consuming fire. He is both good and severe (Rom. 11:22; Heb. 12:29; I John 4:8).
 - Man is born in sin and is not inherently good (Ps. 51:5; Rom. 3:12; 7:18).
 - Sin separates me from a holy God and leads to damnation (Rom. 6:23; Ps. 24:3-4).

- b. Repentance has implications relative to the emotions of man. It means that we have a godly sorrow for sin (II Cor. 7:9-11).

Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter. II Corinthians. 7:9-11

- i. The Hebrew word for repentance means "to grieve, sigh or moan." These words are the language of the emotions.
- ii. The emotion of repentance is demonstrated by the tax collector who came before the Lord (Luke 18:11-14).

Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, "God, I thank You that I am not like other men--extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess." And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

- c. Repentance has implications relative to the will of man. It means a changing of the will or disposition.
 - i. To know that you have done wrong and to be sorry for what you have done is not enough. We complete our repentance by adjusting our will and actually following through with a change of behavior.
 - ii. The prodigal son knew he had done wrong, was sorry for his mistake and then arose and went back to the father in a true spirit of humility.

But when he came to himself, he said, "How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.'" And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

Luke 15:17-20

D. It is important to know how true repentance is demonstrated.

The way in which repentance is demonstrated is sometimes referred to as the fruit of repentance (Mt. 3:7-8).

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance."

The Pharisees and religious leaders were coming to the baptism of John because it was the popular thing to do. But John recognized that they were only going through an external procedure to impress the people. He challenged them to bring forth the fruit associated with genuine repentance.

Bring forth fruit that is consistent with repentance [let your lives prove your change of heart]... --AMP

Prove by the way you live that you have really turned from your sins and turned to God. –NLT

There are eight biblical fruits of genuine repentance.

1. Godly Sorrow for Sin

When true repentance has taken place in a person's life there will be a godly sorry for sin (II Cor. 7:9-11). This is not just being sorry for getting caught or being sorry for the consequences that have come into our lives by virtue of our sinful behavior. It is a genuine grieving over our sin because we see the damnable nature of what we have done and how our sin has hurt the heart of our Father in heaven as well as other people in our lives.

Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter. II Corinthians. 7:9-11

Now I am glad I sent it, not because it hurt you, but because the pain caused you to have remorse and change your ways. It was the kind of sorrow God wants his people to have, so you were not harmed by us in any way. For God can use sorrow in our lives to help us turn away from sin and seek salvation. We will never regret that kind of sorrow. But sorrow without repentance is the kind that results in death. II Corinthians 7:8-9, NLT

“Now, therefore,” says the LORD, “Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.” So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm. Joel 2:12-13

2. Abhorrence of Self

I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. Job 42:5-6

And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, “God, be merciful to me a sinner!” I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

Luke 18:13-14

Pride is at the center or core of all sin. We must see ourselves for whom we are. Have you taken a good look in the mirror of the Word of God and seen yourself lately?

The following article was written by someone who did not want to be known, but it helps us to get a better look at ourselves outside of Christ.

Traits of Self Life

The following are some of the features and manifestations of the self-life. The Holy Spirit alone can interpret and apply these to your individual case. As you read them, examine yourself in the very presence of God. Are you ever conscious of:

A Secret Spirit of Pride—an exalted feeling, in view of your success or position; because of your good training or appearance; because of your natural gifts and abilities. An important, independent spirit?

Love of Human Praise—a secret fondness to being noticed; love of supremacy, drawing attention to self in conversation; a swelling out of self when you have had free time in speaking or praying?

The Stirrings of Anger or Impatience—which, worst of all, you call nervousness or holy indignation; a touchy, sensitive spirit; a disposition to resent and retaliate when disapproved of or contradicted; a desire to throw sharp, heated feelings at another?

Self Will—a stubborn, unteachable spirit; an arguing, talkative spirit; harsh, sarcastic expressions; an unyielding, headstrong disposition; a driving, commanding spirit; a disposition to criticize and pick flaws when set aside and unnoticed; a peevish fretful spirit; a disposition that loves to be coaxed and humored?

Carnal Fear—a man-fearing spirit; a shrinking from reproach and duty; reasoning around your cross; a shrinking from doing your whole duty when around those of wealth or position; a fearfulness that someone will offend and drive some prominent person away; a compromising spirit?

A Jealous Disposition—a secret spirit of envy shut up in your heart; an unpleasant sensation in view of the great prosperity and success of another; a disposition to speak of the faults and failings, rather than the gifts and virtues of those more talented and appreciated than yourself?

A Dishonest, Deceitful Disposition—the evading and covering of the truth; the covering up of your real faults; leaving a better impression of yourself than is

actually true; false humility; exaggeration; straining the truth?

Unbelief—a spirit of discouragement in times of pressure and opposition; lack of quietness and confidence in God; lack of faith and trust in God; a disposition to worry and complain in the midst of pain, poverty, or at the dispensations of Divine Providence; an over-anxious feeling whether everything will come out all right?

Formality and Deadness—a lack of concern for lost souls; dryness and indifference; lack of power with God?

Selfishness—a stinginess with the things that you possess, a love of ease and a love of money, a desire to be served and waited upon by others especially those of “lower station” in life?

These are some of the traits which generally indicate a carnal heart. By prayer, hold your heart open to the searchlight of God, until you see the ground work thereof. *“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me.”* -- Psalm 139:23, 24.

The Holy Ghost will enable you, by confession and faith, to bring your “self-life” to death. Do not patch over it, but go to the very bottom. It alone will pay!

-- Author Unknown

When we live the repentant lifestyle, we despise our selfishness and deal with it whenever it rears its ugly head.

3. Confession of Sins

Confession of sins is in essence an admission of our guilt for the wrongs we have done without excuse or blame shifting. We are not talking about going to a confession booth and confessing to man, we are talking about being open and transparent before the Lord.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. I John 1:9

True confession of sins also includes a plea for God’s mercy. We cannot presume upon the mercy of God. He does not owe it to us (Hos. 14:1-2).

Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God. Your sins have been your downfall! Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to him: “Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips.”

a. We must be like the prodigal son when he came to his senses (Luke 15:21).

And the son said to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.”

- b. We must be like the publican who could not even look up when he understood his condition before a holy God (Luke 18:13).

And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, “God, be merciful to me a sinner!”

- c. We must be like David when he was confronted with the abominable nature of his sin toward Uriah (Ps. 32:1-5; 51:1-17).

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. 2 Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. 3 When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. 4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah 5 I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,” and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah Psalm 32:1-5

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. 4 Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight—that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge. 5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me. 6 Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom. 7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. 8 Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones You have broken may rejoice. 9 Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11 Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit. 13 Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You. 14 Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness. 15 O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. 16 For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise.

Psalm 51:1-17

4. Turning from and Forsaking of Sin

When we repent we are in fact making a complete turn around. In doing so we turn to God but we also turn our back on the sinful things that may have characterized our former lifestyle. The Bible refers to this as putting off the old man or the old nature.

He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy. Proverbs 28:13

So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Jonah 3:5-8

Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. Isaiah 55:6-7

- a. Turning from sin means evaluating the decisions, activities and relationships in our lives in light of our new life in Christ (Acts 2:40).

Peter told the people who responded to the altar call that they needed to “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation” (NIV).

To “save yourself” is to distinguish yourself, separate yourself and deliver yourself. This is not something that God or others can do for you. You must take action in your own life.

There are some questions that will help to evaluate your life’s activities.

- Is it of the world (I John 2:15-17)?

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

- Is it to the glory of God (I Cor. 10:31)?

Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

- Can you invoke God's blessing on it (Pro. 10:22)?

The blessing of the LORD makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it.

- It is a stumbling block to others (Rom. 14:21)? Will someone else use my liberty in this area as an excuse?

It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.

- Does it have the appearance of evil (I Th. 5:22)?

Abstain from every form of evil.

Abstain from all appearance of evil. –KJV

Throw out anything tainted with evil. –MSG

- Is its atmosphere good (II Cor. 6:14)? Could you enjoy communion with God while engaging in this activity?

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

- Is it a weight in your life that drags you down spiritually (Heb. 12:1)?

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us...

We should avoid any thing that would restrict us or slacken our pace in our walk with the Lord.

- b. Forsaking means separating ourselves from those things that do not contribute positively to our walk with the Lord.

We may have to leave some relationships behind.

- c. Forsaking sin means removing all of the things in our life that connect us to a godless life. This involves a renunciation of the past, some house cleaning and perhaps a bonfire or two (Acts 19:18-20).

And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

This was an expensive bonfire. This piece of silver most likely represented a day's wage (Mt. 20:2). 50,000 pieces of silver represents 50,000 day's wages or what one person could earn in 137 years. If a day's wage was R100 then the total would be R5,000,000.

The spiritual value to these individuals of burning their relics of the past was far more significant than the natural value of the items being burned.

This means sifting through:

- Books
 - Magazines
 - Entertainment
 - Paraphernalia/Keepsakes/Mementos
 - CD's
 - DVD's
- d. Forsaking means that we renounce all of our past detestable practices (Ezek. 14:6, NIV, II Cor. 4:1-2).

Therefore say to the house of Israel, "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Repent! Turn from your idols and renounce all your detestable practices!"
Ezekiel 14:6, NIV

We have renounced disgraceful ways (secret thoughts, feelings, desires and underhandedness, the methods and arts that men hide through shame)...
II Corinthians 4:2a, Amp

The word renounce here literally means "to say off for oneself" or "to disown."

Sometimes it has value to verbally renounce things that we are aware of and things that we are not aware of. This would include things like:

- Specific sins with which we have struggled in the past.
- Connections that we have had with Satanic rituals and the occult.
- Sinful family traits that seem to have identified or marked you.
- Wrong evaluations and expectations that have been placed on you by others (parents, teachers, ministers and friends).

- e. Forsaking means that we burn our bridges behind us and make it difficult for ourselves to get back to the old life.

5. Godly Hatred for Sin

“Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations. Not for your sake do I do this,” says the Lord GOD, “let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel!” Thus says the Lord GOD: “On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will also enable you to dwell in the cities, and the ruins shall be rebuilt.” Ezekiel 36:31-33

The godly hatred for sin comes as we realize what sin does to people’s lives and the relationships that are important to them.

6. Turning to the Lord or Putting on the New Man

...but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance. Acts 26:20

Not only must we turn away from our sin, we must also turn to the Lord. It is one thing to put off the old man, it is another thing to put on the new man (Eph. 4:22-24).

...that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

The following verses deal with this putting off and putting on process: Romans 13:12-14; Ephesians 4:17-5:20; Colossians 3:1-14.

The following chart gives us a summary of these verses.

Put Off The Old Man	Put On The New Man
Works of Darkness	Armor of Light
Lying	Speaking the Truth
Stealing	Honest Labor
Corrupt Communication	Edifying Conversation
Bitterness	Kindness
Wrath	Tenderheartedness
Anger	Forgiveness
Malice	Love

Fornication	Worship of God
Uncleanness	Goodness
Filthy Language	Truth
Foolish Talking	Carefulness
Drunkenness	Filled with the Spirit
Covetousness	Generosity
Evil Desires	Mercy
Idolatry	Humility
Selfishness	Serving Others

Just as we once yielded our physical bodies to unrighteousness and sin, we are to now yield our members to righteousness and holiness (Rom. 6:12-14).

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. –NIV

7. Restitution Where Possible

But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.” Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.” Luke 19:8-9

The laws of restitution help us to take responsibility for those we have harmed and instill in us a carefulness about sinning in the future knowing that it is costly to do so.

Restitution can apply to many things:

- Restoring stolen goods.
- Asking for forgiveness for past wrongs.
- Fulfilling past promises that were never kept.
- Rebuilding a broken relationship.

Notice the following key scriptures regarding restoration.

Exodus 22:1-9

If a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, he must pay back five head of cattle for the ox and four sheep for the sheep. 2 If a thief is caught breaking in and is struck so that he dies, the defender is not guilty of bloodshed; 3 but if it happens after sunrise, he is guilty of bloodshed. A thief must certainly make restitution, but if he has nothing, he must be sold to pay for his theft. 4 If the

stolen animal is found alive in his possession-whether ox or donkey or sheep-he must pay back double. 5 If a man grazes his livestock in a field or vineyard and lets them stray and they graze in another man's field, he must make restitution from the best of his own field or vineyard. 6 If a fire breaks out and spreads into thornbushes so that it burns shocks of grain or standing grain or the whole field, the one who started the fire must make restitution. 7 If a man gives his neighbor silver or goods for safekeeping and they are stolen from the neighbor's house, the thief, if he is caught, must pay back double. 8 But if the thief is not found, the owner of the house must appear before the judges to determine whether he has laid his hands on the other man's property. 9 In all cases of illegal possession of an ox, a donkey, a sheep, a garment, or any other lost property about which somebody says, 'This is mine,' both parties are to bring their cases before the judges. The one whom the judges declare guilty must pay back double to his neighbor.

Note in these verses that restoration always involved a recovery of the original loss plus additional goods of the same kind. Sometimes restoration involved up to four to five times as much as the original loss. It should also be noted that the restoration given was to be of the highest quality.

Leviticus 6:1-5

If anyone sins and is unfaithful to the LORD by deceiving his neighbor about something entrusted to him or left in his care or stolen, or if he cheats him, 3 or if he finds lost property and lies about it, or if he swears falsely, or if he commits any such sin that people may do-- 4 when he thus sins and becomes guilty, he must return what he has stolen or taken by extortion, or what was entrusted to him, or the lost property he found, 5 or whatever it was he swore falsely about. He must make restitution in full, add a fifth of the value to it and give it all to the owner on the day he presents his guilt offering.

Note in these verses the same principle is found. Restoration is not merely a recovery of that which was lost, but it included an additional sum that was to be added to the original loss.

Without these fruits of repentance being manifest, the repentance process is somehow incomplete.

E. There are great results that spring from genuine repentance.

1. There are results in heaven (Luke 15:7, 10).

I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent...In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

2. There are personal results.
 - a. It brings pardon and remission of sins (Acts 3:19; Luke 24:47; Is. 55:7).
 - b. It produces qualities in us that help us to keep in good stead before the Lord (II Cor. 7:10-11).

For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

The above verse gives us seven results in our lives when we truly repent.

- Carefulness
- Clear Conscience
- Hatred for Sin
- Fear of God
- Godly Desires
- Zeal
- Revenge or Vindication

Lesson 10-12

Christianity Based on True Faith

I. Faith in God is absolutely essential in the new birth process.

- A. True repentance and faith are inseparable. They are mutually dependent upon each other.

Ern Baxter: “To profess to turn to God without forsaking sin in repentance ends in hypocrisy. To attempt to forsake sin without turning to God in faith ends in failure and despair.”

1. Jesus closely connected repentance and faith (Mark 1:14-15).

Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”

2. The Early Church leaders closely connected repentance and faith (Acts 20:18-21).

And when they had come to him, he said to them: “You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

- C. When you turn from something it naturally implies a turning to something else.

1. We turn from idols to serve the living God (Acts 14:15; I Th. 1:9).

For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God...

I Thessalonians 1:9

2. We turn from darkness to light (Acts 26:15-18).

Paul rehearsed his initial call from God when he stood before King Agrippa.

So I said, “Who are You, Lord?” And He said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of

Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.”

- D. The writer to the Hebrews indicated that faith toward God is part of our Christian foundation (Heb. 6:1-3).

Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits.

- E. Paul declared in Romans that we are justified by faith (Rom. 5:1-2).

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Therefore, since we have been made right in God’s sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of highest privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God’s glory. –NLT

II. Faith can be defined in several ways:

Teacher’s note: Ask class to take a few minutes and write down their own definition of faith. Then take a few minutes to have them share what they wrote down.

- A. Webster: “Trust, firm persuasion, assurance, firm conviction, confidence in another’s word.”
- B. Kevin Conner: “Faith toward God is simply to trust God, to have confidence in Him and His word. To believe what God has said, that His word is true, and what He has promised, He will perform.”
- C. R.A. Torrey: “To believe God is to rely upon or have unhesitating assurance of the truth of God’s testimony, even though it is unsupported by any other evidence, and to rely upon or have unfaltering assurance of the fulfillment of His promises, even though everything seen seems against fulfillment.”
- D. Hebrews 11:1 – “Now faith is the assurance (the confirmation, the title deed) of things (we) hope for, being the proof of things (we) do not see and the conviction of their reality - faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses.” – Amplified Bible

Other translations:

What is faith? It is the confident assurance that what we hope for is going to happen. It is the evidence of things we cannot yet see. –NLT

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. –NIV

Faith makes us sure of what we hope for and gives us proof of what we cannot see. –CEV

Now faith means putting our full confidence in the things we hope for, it means being certain of things we cannot see. –Phillips

- E. Pamela Reeve in her book *Faith Is...* offers many definitions that relate faith to our daily lives (*Faith Is...*, 1970, Multnomah Press). Here are just a few examples:

Faith is...

- The conviction of realities I cannot see or feel.
- The handle by which I take God’s promises and apply them to my problems.
- Allowing God to straighten the record when false things have been said about me.
- Doing the right thing regardless of the consequences knowing God will turn the ultimate effect to good.
- Rejecting the feeling of panic when things seem out of control—His control.
- Recognizing that God is the Lord of Time when my idea of timing doesn’t agree with His.
- The assurance that God is perfecting His design for me when my life’s course, once a swift-flowing current seems a stagnant pool.
- Confidence that God is acting for my highest good when He answers “NO” to my prayers.
- Not related to my believing hard enough, nor my emotional exhilaration or flatness, but rests on what God guarantees in His Word.
- Not a vague hope of a happy hereafter, but an assurance of heaven based on my trust in Christ’s death as payment for my sins.

III. Faith is important in the life of the believer.

- A. It is necessary for salvation (Mark 16:15-16; Luke 8:12; I Cor. 1:21; Eph. 2:8-9).

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." Mark 16:15-16

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. Ephesians 2:8-9

- B. It is necessary to please God (Heb. 11:6).

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Hebrews 11:6

- C. It is the quality that defines our Christian way of life (Rom. 1:16-17).

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." Romans 1:17

- D. It opens the door to the supernatural realm of God.

1. It opens the door to answered prayer (Mt. 21:22).

And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.

2. It opens the door to the miraculous power of God (Mark 9:23; 21:21).

So Jesus answered and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' it will be done." Matthew 21:21

Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." Mark 9:23

3. It determines the measure of blessing that we receive from the Lord (Mt. 8:13; 9:27-30; 15:28).

Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you." And his servant was healed that same hour. Matthew 8:13

When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, "Son of David, have mercy on us!" And when He had come into the

house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord." Then He touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith let it be to you." And their eyes were opened.
Matthew 9:27-30

IV. Faith is something for which we must contend.

A. There is a fight of faith (I Tim. 6:12; II Tim. 4:7; Jude 3; Jam. 1:2-3; I Pet. 1:6-7).

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed a good confession in the presence of many witnesses."

I Timothy 6:12

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

II Timothy 4:7

"Contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints." Jude 3

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience..." James 1:2-3

"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ." I Peter 1:6-7

B. There is a fight of faith because there are opponents of our faith.

Note that there are at least six opponents of faith:

1. The Voice of Satan

Satan will always seek to get us to doubt those things that the Lord has spoken to us. He will always put a question mark on the word of God. When he first approached Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, he challenged what God said to them with the statement, "Has God indeed said?" (Gen. 3:1).

When Satan tempted Jesus after His spectacular baptism he challenged what God has spoken over Jesus about His sonship when he said, "If you are the Son of God..." (Mt. 4:3).

It is important for us to understand that Satan is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44). We need to treat his voice the same way that Jesus did when He said "Get behind me, Satan!" (Luke 4:8).

2. Mental Doubts

We can have doubts just like Peter when he stepped out of the boat and on to the water. He was fine until he began to doubt that he could really do what he was in fact doing. He looked at the circumstances and began to analyze what he was doing from a natural perspective and he lost faith. He began to doubt that the Word of the Lord could sustain him (Mt. 14:24:32). When we try to figure out everything that God reveals and understand it from a human point of view we open ourselves up to doubt.

But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. 25 Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. 26 And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. 27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." 28 And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." 29 So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. 30 But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" 31 And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" 32 And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Matthew 14:24-32

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. James 1:5-8

3. Discouragement

When things do not go as planned or they do not happen according to our schedule it is easy to get discouraged.

This is why one of the most often repeated challenges in the Bible is to "be strong and very courageous" (See: Deut. 31:6; Josh. 1:2-9; I Chr. 28:20; II Chr. 15:7)

Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave or forsake you.

Deuteronomy 31:6

Discouragement is the opposite of courage. Courage is the quality of mind that meets danger or opposition with calmness and firmness. It is the ability to be unshaken in the face of danger.

4. Insurmountable Circumstances

When we face obstacles that seem to be much stronger than we are our faith is challenged just like that of the children of Israel when they faced the Red Sea, the giants in the land or Goliath of Gath. These circumstances can lead us to be fearful or full of fear which is the opposite of faithful or full of faith.

5. Physical Weaknesses

When we start looking at ourselves and seeing how frail and weak we really are it is easy to lose faith. Just like Moses when he said “Who am I?” or “I am not eloquent” (Ex. 3:11; 4:10). Or when Jeremiah said “I am but a youth” (Jer. 1:6).

6. Lack of Financial Provision or Poverty

When we see how much money our vision is going to take and we see how little we really have it is easy to shrink back. The problem is that we forget that God has said that all of the gold is His and all of the silver is His (Hag. 2:8). Compared to God, even the richest man in the world is a poor man.

V. There are several keys to developing an overcoming faith.

- A. The first key to developing an overcoming faith is exposing oneself to the Word of God.

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Romans 10:17

Paul speaks of “the hearing of faith...”in Galatians 3:2 and 5.

1. Understand that faith comes through the avenue of God’s Word.

When we ignore the word of God in our lives or give it a very small place, we have to understand that we will be weak in faith. The more that we bathe our mind in the word of God the more we will think God-thoughts, that is, the more we will think like God thinks.

2. Put yourself in a place of hearing the Word of God.

- a. Listen attentively when it is preached. Discipline yourself to take notes on what is being said. Review those notes through the week.

- b. Read the Word daily. Keep a journal or diary by your side and write down what you perceive the Holy Spirit is saying to you in and through what you are reading. Act on what you feel the Lord is saying.

- c. Take every opportunity to receive from the Word. The more word that we

have in us the more faith will grow in us.

3. Feed your faith and your doubts will starve to death.
 - a. Feed on relationships that reinforce your faith.
 - b. Feed on activities that build and inspire your faith.
 - c. Feed on literature that is word-based (magazines, entertainment, books, biographies, etc.).
- B. The second key to developing an overcoming faith is praying in the Holy Spirit.

But you, beloved, building yourselves up on you most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit. Jude 20

In many ways this is a great mystery. How can speaking in tongues build up one's faith? Yet Paul made it clear in his epistle to the Corinthians that when someone speaks in tongues they edify themselves (I Cor. 14:4; Jude 20).

- C. The third key to developing an overcoming faith is living a life of quick obedience to God.
 1. Faith and obedience are inseparable. If we believe we will obey. If we obey it is because we believe.

The promises that are given to believers are given to those who obey (Acts 5:32).

And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.

To profess to believe and yet not obey is hypocrisy (Mt. 23:2-3; Tit. 1:15-16).

Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do." Matthew 23:1-3

To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work. Titus 1:15-16

2. Faith is demonstrated by obedience (Jam. 2:18-26). Faith is dead faith if it does not lead to action.

But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! ²⁰ But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? ²² Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? ²³ And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God. ²⁴ You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. ²⁵ Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? ²⁶ For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

3. As we are hearers and doers of the Word and practice a lifestyle of obedience, faith grows in us and we walk from faith to faith (Col. 2:6-7).

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. Colossians 2:6-7

4. The heroes of faith in Hebrew 11 all demonstrated their faith by specific actions.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. Hebrews 11:1-2

It was their faith that made our ancestors pleasing to God. CEV

- a. God demonstrated faith when He spoke forth boldly to create the worlds when nothing existed (Heb. 11:3).

By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

- b. Abel demonstrated faith when he offered a sacrifice that was not appealing to the human eye but was that for which God had asked (Heb. 11:4).

By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.

- c. Enoch demonstrated faith when he believed that after walking with God consistently for 300 years he could go home with God when invited to him do so (Heb. 11:5).

By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, “and was not found, because God had taken him”; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

- d. Noah demonstrated faith when he spent 100 years building an ark to save mankind from a flood caused by rain which he had never seen (Heb. 11:7).

By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

- e. Abraham demonstrated faith when he was willing to leave his home country at the direction of the Lord even though he did not know exactly where he would end up (Heb. 11:8-12).

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude--innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.

- f. Abraham also demonstrated faith when he was willing to offer up his son Isaac at the word of the Lord believing that God could raise him from the dead to fulfill the promises to him (Heb. 11:17-19).

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, “In Isaac your seed shall be called,” concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

How do we know that all of these people had faith? We know it because of what they did in response to what God had said. It should be noted that there is a difference between faith and presumption. The Children of Israel did not respond in faith to God’s challenge to go into the land of promise because they saw the giants (Num. 14:1-45). Had they gone in God would have gone before them and the giants would not have been a problem. However, after they found out God’s judgment upon them for not responding in faith some of them insisted on going forward. Unfortunately they had missed their window of opportunity. Now they determined to go in their own strength without the word of the Lord and their action was based on presumption and not on faith. Of course as certain ones

moved forward in this way their efforts ended in failure and defeat.

Read Numbers 14:1-45 as time permits.

5. Faith is not an emotional feeling; it is acting on the principles of God's word without the evidence of feeling. It is being governed by the Word of God without the need for any other proof (Hebrew 1:1).

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

–NIV

What is faith? It is the confident assurance that what we hope for is going to happen. It is the evidence of things we cannot yet see. –NLT

6. In a very real sense, **faith is obedience.**

God makes a promise, faith believes it, hope anticipates it, patience quietly awaits it.

D. The fourth key to developing an overcoming faith is maintaining a faith confession.

1. Christianity is first and foremost a “confession” (Heb. 3:1).

*Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our **confession**... Hebrews 3:1*

- a. As such there is a language of faith.
- b. As such there is a voice of faith.
- c. There is a faith that speaks.
- d. The word “confession” means “saying the same thing.”
 - i. Faith is agreeing with God or saying the same thing as God on each and every point.
 - ii. Confession is the verbal affirmation of the truth that we have received.

In a sense when we use the word “Amen” we are giving a verbal affirmation of what we are hearing (Neh. 5:12-13).

So they said, “We will restore it, and will require nothing from them; we will do as you say.” Then I called the priests, and required an oath from them that they would do according to this promise. Then I shook out the fold of my garment and said, “So may God shake out each man from his house, and from his property, who does not perform this promise. Even thus may he be shaken out and emptied.” And all the assembly said, “Amen!” and praised the LORD. Then the people did according to this promise.

iii. Jesus only said those things that He heard the Father saying (John 14:10, 24).

2. True faith speaks or has a voice (Rom. 10:6-13).

For Moses wrote that the law's way of making a person right with God requires obedience to all of its commands. 6 But the way of getting right with God through faith says, "You don't need to go to heaven" (to find Christ and bring him down to help you). 7 And it says, "You don't need to go to the place of the dead" (to bring Christ back to life again). 8 Salvation that comes from trusting Christ--which is the message we preach--is already within easy reach. In fact, the Scriptures say, "The message is close at hand; it is on your lips and in your heart." 9 For if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved. 11 As the Scriptures tell us, "Anyone who believes in him will not be disappointed." 12 Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They all have the same Lord, who generously gives his riches to all who ask for them. 13 For "Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." –NLT

There are two types of speaking or confessions mentioned in these verses:

- a. There is negative speaking ("Do not say!"). There is a type of speaking that destroys faith.

But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down from above)..."
Romans 10:6

- i. We are not to speak contrary to the Word of God.
- ii. It is a sin to speak other than what God says (Rom. 14:23). Whatever is not of faith is sin (unbelief).
- iii. We are snared by the words of our mouth (Pro. 6:2).

You are snared by the words of your mouth; you are taken by the words of your mouth.

Job was a man who understood that no matter how bad the situation may get and no matter the internal turmoil or contradiction that you may be experiencing, it is important to maintain a confession of faith. Notice the faith of Job in the following verses and see how he maintained faith, he maintained a good confession, he maintained high standards, and he maintained his

principled life in the face of contradiction (Job 1:20-22; 2:9-10; 19:25-27; 27:2-6).

Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong. Job 1:20-22

Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!" But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips. Job 2:9-10

For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me! Job 19:25-27

"As God lives, who has taken away my justice, and the Almighty, who has made my soul bitter, as long as my breath is in me, and the breath of God in my nostrils, my lips will not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit. Far be it from me that I should say you are right; till I die I will not put away my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me as long as I live." Job 27:2-6

Have you ever noticed how many common phrases that are used in our culture are really anti-faith. Here are just a few to think about...

- All good things must come to an end.
 - Seeing is believing.
 - God helps those who help themselves.
 - Everyone is entitled to at least one mistake.
 - If you can't beat them join them.
 - To each his own.
 - All things work together for good.
 - Well, no one is perfect.
 - Love means you never have to say you are sorry.
 - Just leave it alone and it will work itself out.
 - Etc.
- b. There is positive speaking ("Saying what God says"). There is a type of speaking that increases faith.
- i. You must hear it. Faith comes by hearing.

- ii. You must believe it in your heart.
 - iii. You must speak it. The righteousness of faith speaks (Romans 10:6)!
 - iv. The Children of Israel lost out because of a bad confession (i.e. We can not do it). Our confession is “YES WE CAN!”
- c. The heart and the mouth are closely connected.
- i. What we speak is often a reflection of our heart (Mt. 12:33-37).

Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. 34 Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. 35 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. 36 But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. 37 For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.

Notice in these verses that Jesus is really talking about words—our use of them, the power of them and the fruit that they produce.

- ii. Many verses connect the heart and the mouth (Deut. 30:14; Ps. 19:4; Eccl. 5:2; Rom. 10:9-10).

But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it. Deuteronomy 30:14

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer. Psalm 19:4

Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; therefore let your words be few. Ecclesiastes 5:2

...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. Romans 10:9-10

- E. The fifth key to developing an overcoming faith is fostering right meditations and a faith focus.
- 1. Fostering right meditations involves two disciplines.

- a. Fostering right meditations involves avoiding the wrong stuff.

Paul seems to say a lot about avoiding the wrong stuff to his son in the faith, Timothy. Perhaps Timothy had an unhealthy curiosity about the world's interpretation of reality. Notice his admonitions and his list of things to avoid.

- i. Shun profane and idle babblings that overthrow the faith of some (II Tim. 2:16-18). Paul was encouraging Timothy to avoid fruitless discussions which do nothing but sow doubts in the minds of people.

But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.

- ii. Do not listen to fables and endless genealogies that do not build faith and cause many to stray from the truth (I Tim. 1:3-7).

As I urged you when I went into Macedonia--remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith. Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.

Don't let people waste time in endless speculation over myths and spiritual pedigrees. For these things only cause arguments; they don't help people live a life of faith in God. The purpose of my instruction is that all the Christians there would be filled with love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and sincere faith. But some teachers have missed this whole point. They have turned away from these things and spend their time arguing and talking foolishness. They want to be known as teachers of the law of Moses, but they don't know what they are talking about, even though they seem so confident. –NLT

- iii. Reject seducing spirits and doctrines of devils that will cause some to depart from the faith (I Tim. 4:1-5).

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons...

I Timothy 4:1

- iv. Reject old wives' fables that are contrary to faith (I Tim. 4:6-7).

If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness.

Here we are to avoid propagating stories that are commonly circulated but they have no basis in fact or reality. Superstitions would fall into this category (e.g. Friday the thirteenth, black cats, walking under a ladder, stepping on a crack, horoscopes, astrological signs, etc.).

- v. Avoid the contradictions of what is falsely called science or knowledge which cause some to stray from the faith (I Tim. 6:20-21).

O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith.

The King James Version says, “and oppositions of science falsely so called.”

“Religion has nothing to fear from true science, and the minister of the gospel is not exhorted to dread that. Real science, in all its advances, contributes to the support of religion; and just in proportion as that is promoted will it be found to sustain the Bible, and to confirm the claims of religion to the faith of mankind... It is only false or pretended science that religion has to dread, and which the friend of Christianity is to avoid. The meaning here is, that Timothy was to avoid everything which falsely laid claim to being ‘knowledge’ or ‘science.’ There was much of this in the world at the time the apostle wrote; and this, more perhaps than anything else, has tended to corrupt true religion since.” --Barnes

- vi. Do not consume yourselves in “doubtful disputations” (Rom. 14:1).

Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things.

In other words, keep the main things the main things. Do not quibble over or get “hung up” on issues that are debatable at best. Allow for some differences of interpretation so as to have respect for the view of others.

- vii. Philosophies, vain deceits and traditions of men can also lead us down the wrong road (Col. 2:8).

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

Don't let anyone lead you astray with empty philosophy and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the evil powers of this world, and not from Christ. –NLT

- b. Fostering right meditations involves thinking on the right stuff.

Paul instructed us to think on these things...

And now, dear brothers and sisters, let me say one more thing as I close this letter. Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned from me and heard from me and saw me doing, and the God of peace will be with you. Philippians 4:8-9, NLT

- True (Truth, Not Falsehood)
- Honorable (Noble, Honest, Not deceitful)
- Right (Just)
- Pure (Chaste, Clean)
- Lovely (Proper, Appropriate)
- Admirable (Reputable)
- Excellent (Virtuous)
- Praiseworthy (Commendable)

2. Fostering a faith focus means we focus our spiritual eyes on things above (II Cor. 4:16-18; Col. 3:1-3).

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. II Corinthians 4:16-18

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Colossians 3:1-3

- a. This means that we focus on God's Word rather than man or Satan's word.
- b. This means that we focus on the magnitude of our God rather than on the size of our problem and the limitation of our resources. This is where the act of worship can assist us. As we worship the Lord we magnify Him (Acts 10:46).

Wendell Smith in his book *Great Faith* expressed confidence in the magnitude of God this way (pg. 27).

- There is no problem He cannot solve.
- There is no question He cannot answer.
- There is no disease He cannot heal.
- There is no demon He cannot cast out.
- There is no enemy He cannot defeat.
- There is no difficulty He cannot overcome.
- There is no stronghold He cannot bring down.
- There is no bondage He cannot break.
- There is no prison He cannot open.
- There is no need He cannot meet.
- There is no mountain He cannot move.
- There is nothing too hard for our God!

c. This means that we focus on what God says about us and not what the devil says about us (See Supplement on the following page).

God's Unchanging Word **By Martin Luther**

For feelings come and feelings go
And feelings are deceiving:
My warrant is the Word of God,
Naught else is worth believing.

Though all my heart should feel condemned
For want of some sweet token,
There is one greater than my heart
Whose Word cannot be broken.

I'll trust in God's unchanging Word
Til soul and body sever:
For, though all things shall pass away,
His Word shall stand forever.

**Supplement to Lesson
12 from: Neil Anderson,
Steps to Freedom in
Christ**

John 1:12
John 15:15
Rom. 5:1
1 Cor. 6:17
1 Cor. 6:19, 20
1 Cor. 12:27
Eph. 1:1
Eph. 1:5
Eph. 2:18
Col. 1:14
Col. 2:10

I Am Accepted

I am God's child.
I am Christ's friend.
I have been justified.
I am united with the Lord, I am one in spirit with Him.
I have been bought with a price. I belong to God.
I am a member of Christ's body.
I am a saint.
I have been adopted as God's child.
I have direct access to God through the Holy Spirit.
I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins.
I am complete in Christ.

I Am Secure

Rom. 8:1, 2
Rom. 8:28
Rom. 8:31-34
Rom. 8:35-39
2 Cor. 1:21, 22
Col. 3:3
Phil. 1:6

Phil. 3:20
2 Tim. 1:7

Heb. 4:16
1 John 5:18

I am free forever from condemnation.
I am assured that all things work together for good.
I am free from any condemning charges against me.
I cannot be separated from the love of God.
I have been established, anointed and sealed by God.
I am hidden with Christ in God.
I am confident that the good work that God has begun in me will be perfected.
I am a citizen of heaven.
I have not been given a spirit of fear but of power, love and a sound mind.
I can find grace and mercy to help in time of need.
I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me,

I Am Significant

Matt. 5:13, 14
John 15:1, 5
John 15:16
Acts 1:8
1 Cor. 3:16
2 Cor. 5:17-21
2 Cor. 6:1
Eph. 2:6
Eph. 2:10
Eph. 3:12
Phil. 4:13

I am the salt and light of the earth.
I am a branch of the true vine, a channel of His life.
I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit.
I am a personal witness of Christ.
I am God's temple.
I am a minister of reconciliation for God.
I am God's coworker (1 Cor. 3:9).
I am seated with Christ in the heavenly realm.
I am God's workmanship.
I may approach God with freedom and confidence.
I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Lesson 13

Christianity based on Separation in Baptism

Part of the proper Christian birth as outlined by Peter on the Day of Pentecost included the experience of water baptism (Acts 2:37-38).

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Evidently Peter saw this experience as essential for people to be able to walk out the demands of the Christian life.

In this course on Victorious Christianity we are not going to try to prove that Jesus commanded baptism or that the apostles expected people to be baptized (which they did). In addition, we are not going to try to substantiate that believer’s baptism by immersion is the true biblical model for water baptism. We want to focus on the spiritual reasons for being baptized and why the experience of baptism is so essential if we are going to be able to live overcoming lives.

For those who want more teaching on the subject of baptism you can refer to the course titled Ministering to Personal Needs where you can find more detailed teaching on the subject.

I. Why should believers be baptized?

There are many reasons why believers should be baptized.

- A. The baptism of believers is a command of Christ and, therefore, a matter of obedience (Mt. 28:19-20).

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”
Amen.*

In baptism God gives us a chance at the very start of our walk with Him to demonstrate if we really understand what it means to have Jesus as the Lord of our lives. How would it work if you went to a new place of employment and on the first day your supervisor asked you to do something? Would you be likely to say, “Do I have to in order to be paid?” Yet for many this is the attitude that they express when it comes to water baptism. If Jesus is really the Lord of our lives it does not put us in good stead if we resist His very first command.

- B. Jesus closely connected baptism with the experience of salvation (Mark 16:15-16).

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."

- C. Because we validate our faith by our obedience to the Word of God (Jam. 2:17-18).

Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

Water baptism is an essential part of obedience; it is not optional. To refuse baptism is to live in disobedience to the clearly revealed word of God.

- D. God wants to do some significant things in our life through the experience of baptism.

God never asks us to do things just for the sake of doing them. He never gives us a form without meaning behind the form. God wants to work in and through our baptismal experience to affect certain things in our lives.

II. What takes place in baptism?

- A. There is a spiritual cleansing that takes place in water baptism (Acts 22:16).

Ananias told Paul soon after his conversion to Christianity...

And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

The actual water that we are plunged into does not have the power to cleanse us of our sins, but the Holy Spirit works in connection with the God prescribed means.

There are several agents of cleansing in the life of the believer including:

1. The Word of God (Eph. 5:26; Jon 15:3)
2. The Blood of Jesus (I John 1:7; Heb. 9:14)
3. The experience of repentance, faith, confession and conversion (Acts 15:9; Tit. 3:5; I John 1:9)

As believers it is important to take advantage of every provision that God has made for us to be purified.

- B. There is a new identification with our spiritual leader (Christ) in baptism (I Cor. 10:1-4).

Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.

When the Children of Israel were in Egypt they were subject to Pharaoh. They were slaves to him. When they crossed through the Red Sea and partook of the deliverance that was provided through the leadership of Moses, they had a new identity. They were no longer in Pharaoh, they were in Moses. They identified with a new leader. They did not become leaderless or leaders over themselves.

When we are baptized we are baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3-6).

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

1. We identify with Him in His death.
 2. We identify with Him in His burial.
 3. We identify with Him in His resurrection.
- C. We lose our old master (sin, Satan) and become servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:5-23). As a result we receive new power over life-dominating sins.
1. Before we came to Christ we were the slaves of sin (Rom. 6:17, 19).
 - a. This means that we were controlled and dominated by sin.
 - b. This means that sin had power over us.
 - c. Slaves must obey their masters.
 2. When we come to Christ and are baptized, those chains of slavery are broken.

Slaves can only be freed in a couple of ways:
 - a. They can buy their freedom (Acts 22:28).

We do not have what it takes to purchase our own freedom.

- b. They can be freed voluntarily by their master.

Satan is not about to let us go of his own will.

- c. They can die and be buried.

If a slave dies, his old master can no longer expect any response from that slave. They are dead to their old master. This is in essence what takes place in baptism. We die to sin breaking its hold on us; we are buried and we rise to new life and to serve a new master.

- 3. When we are baptized we die and are buried (Rom. 6:3-4, 6-7; Col. 2:12).

...knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Romans 6:6-7

...buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. Colossians 2:12

- a. Because of this we no longer are bound to our old master.
- b. Because of this the chains of slavery have been broken off of us and we have been set free from sin (Rom. 6:7, 17-18).

But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. Romans 6:17-18

- c. Because of this we can “play dead” whenever Satan would seek to control us.
- d. Because of this we are actually dead to sin.
- e. Because of this sin and death do not have dominion over us (Rom. 6:9, 14).
- f. Because of this the “old man” or old nature is buried. It should be noted that the intention is that this old nature remain buried.

The old nature is that nature which we have inherited from Adam. It is the sin nature that cannot do anything but sin. It is sometimes referred to as the “body of sin” or the “body of death” (Rom. 6:6; 7:24).

...knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

Romans 6:6

But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

Romans 7:23-24

4. When we are baptized we do not stay dead but we rise to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4-5).

- a. Now we can see the new man emerge. Suddenly we have choices that we did not have before (Rom. 6:12-13).

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

Unfortunately we can give ourselves back to sin and Satan. We can continue to respond to him as if he still has power over us.

- b. Now we have become slaves to God and slaves of righteousness (Rom. 6:19, 22).

We do not rise to serve ourselves. We do not rise having no master at all. We rise to serve the Lord Who has bought us with a price and purchased us with His Own blood.

- c. Now we must reckon ourselves dead to sin but alive to God (Rom. 6:11).

In the same way, you must think of yourselves as dead to the power of sin. But Christ Jesus has given life to you, and you live for God. –CEV

To reckon is to treat something as absolute fact.

- d. Now we must present our members to God as instruments of righteousness (Rom. 6:13, 16, 19).

I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. Romans 6:19-20

In the same way that you used to present your members to the dictates of sin, now present your members to God. James describes the process of temptation in four steps (Jam. 1:14-15).

But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

- i. It begins with a thought.
- ii. It becomes a meditation.
- iii. It becomes an action.
- iv. It ultimately leads to life or death.

This process works for both sin and righteousness.

D. We receive the New Covenant seal of circumcision of the heart.

1. This is pictured in the Old Testament rite of circumcision under the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 17:10-14).

Circumcision had three parts.

- a. The cutting away of the flesh and, hence, the shedding of blood.
 - b. It was to be performed on the eighth day. Eight is the number of resurrection and new beginning.
 - c. There was a naming of the child at this time.
2. The New Testament circumcision of the heart also involves three things (Col. 2:11-15).

In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. 13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

When you came to Christ, you were “circumcised,” but not by a physical procedure. It was a spiritual procedure--the cutting away of your sinful nature. 12 For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to a new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead. 13 You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ. He forgave all our sins. 14 He canceled the record that contained the charges

against us. He took it and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ's cross. 15 In this way, God disarmed the evil rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross of Christ. –NLT

- a. A separation from the lusts of the flesh by an appropriation of the shed blood of Christ. It involves an offering up of ourselves as living sacrifices and so identifying with the death of Christ.
- b. We experience the quickening power of God to rise above sin and its power as we rise to a new beginning.
- c. We have a new name invoked over us, the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 1:19; 2:9).

III. What is the significance of the Name used on connection with water baptism?

- A. The disciples were commanded to baptize in the “name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Mt. 28:19-20). To repeat the command is not to fulfill the command.

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”
Amen.*

- B. Notice how the disciples fulfill this command (Acts 8:16; 10:47-48; 19:5).

For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Acts 8:16

“Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days. Acts 10:47-48

They baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ or some variation of the name. The terms Father, Son and Holy Spirit are titles. Jesus was the fullness of the Godhead bodily and was given the Godhead name, Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus commanded that baptism was to be administered in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19-20), which name the disciples came to see on the basis of Jesus' ascension and exaltation (Acts 2:33-36), was the Lord Jesus Christ. When they baptized, they baptized in this manner (Acts 2:36-41; 8:12-16, 35-38; 10:48).

- C. The Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost is fulfilled in the fullness of the Godhead bodily, the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Therefore to baptize in the Name of the LORD JESUS CHRIST is to fulfill the command of Christ (Col. 3:17).

“When we are baptized into the Name of the Father it gives us the place of a child and all the privileges of a child, all the inheritance and wealth of a child. We are baptized into the protection and care and fellowship of the God of the universe as our Father. We take on all that union means. We have the standing of a son, the privilege of a son, the responsibilities of a son. We become by that baptism a joint heir with Jesus, and an heir of God... When we are baptized into the Name of the Holy Spirit, we are baptized into the Name, wealth, power, wisdom and glory of God’s representative on the earth – all the Spirit has we are baptized into.” –E.W. Kenyon

- D. In baptism we become partakers of the family name (Eph. 3:4-15).

“Baptism in this sense is equivalent to marriage. When the wife puts on marriage she takes her husband’s name and enters into her husband’s possessions and has legal right to her husband’s home. When the believer is baptized into the Name of Christ, he puts on all that is in Christ. He not only puts on the Name but takes his legal rights and his privileges in Christ.” –E. W. Kenyon

All through the Scripture a name change indicated a change in nature as well (Abraham, Sarah, Jacob). As God works through you in baptism, expect your nature to change.

- E. What would be a suitable statement in conjunction with baptism?

“Upon the confession of your faith, I baptize you into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; in the Name of the LORD JESUS CHRIST that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so you also shall rise to walk in newness of life.”

This formula:

1. Quotes the command of Christ as declared in the Gospels
2. Invokes the name of the Lord Jesus Christ as demonstrated in the Book of Acts.
3. Declares the spiritual significance as revealed in the Epistles.

It is very obvious that baptism is more than just an external experience in the Christian life. God wants to do something lasting and permanent at this special time. But if each individual would respond in faith to all that God says is available in baptism, baptism will be one of the greatest experiences of their Christian walk.

Lesson 14

Christianity based on the Power of the Holy Spirit

Jesus has given us tools with which to walk in victory as believers. He is interested in our complete success. He wants us to achieve our purpose and arrive at our God-given destiny. When Jesus left the earth He told His waiting disciples that He would send another comforter to be with them. This “other” Comforter would be to them what Jesus had been to them. This “other” comforter would be another comforter of the exact same kind.

As believers it is essential that we take advantage of Jesus’ gift and cultivate a close relationship to the Holy Spirit in our Christian walk.

Of course when we are born again, we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit takes up residence within us. But there are some other experiences with the Holy Spirit that will help to ensure that we walk in victory as believers.

I. If we are to walk in victory, we must experience the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

- A. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was important enough for the early believers that Jesus instructed them to wait on their mission until they received it (Acts 1:4, 8).
- B. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is referred to as the promise of the Father (Acts 1:4).
- C. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is an endowment with power to do the commands of Christ (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8).
- D. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a definite experience of which we can know that we have or have not received (Acts 19:2).
- E. The baptism of the Holy Spirit takes place at a given point in time (Acts 1:5).
- F. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is an operation of the Spirit distinct from and subsequent to the conversion experience (Acts 8:12, 15-16; 19:1-2).

Every true believer has the Holy Spirit, but not every believer has the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

- G. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is part of the proper Christian birth and separation from the old life (Acts 2:38-39).

It is not our purpose in this class to substantiate this as a biblical experience. You may go to our course on *Ministering to Personal Needs* for more teaching on the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Suffice it to say that we cannot experience full victory as a Christian without

this experience.

II. If we are to walk in victory, we must utilize our spiritual language.

It is also not our purpose in this class to substantiate the fact that “speaking with other tongues” is the initial evidence of having received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is clear that when you look at every place where people received this experience in the Bible, speaking with tongues was the common denominator (See: Acts 2:1-4; 8:14-17; 10:44-48; 11:15-17; 19:1-6).

We will only cite one verse, Acts 10:44-46.

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.

It was speaking with other tongues that convinced Peter and the other apostles that the Gentiles had indeed been baptized in the Holy Spirit the same as they had.

The focus of this section is on speaking with other tongues itself.

A. Praying or speaking in tongues is the same as praying in the spirit (I Cor. 14:14-15).

For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.

Praying in the Spirit should be an integral part of your time with the Lord. Even though when you pray in tongues you do not fully understand what you are saying (I Cor. 14:2), it is important to do so because when you pray in tongues several things take place.

For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.

B. Praying or speaking in tongues offers many benefits.

1. When you pray in tongues, you build yourself up in your faith (I Cor. 14:4; Jude 20).

But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit... Jude 20

2. When you pray in tongues, your spirit connects directly with God's Spirit (I Cor. 14:2, 14-15).

For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God...

I Corinthians 14:2a

3. When you pray in tongues, you dispel doubt created by Satan's lies (Eph. 6:17-18).

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints...

4. When you pray in tongues, the Holy Spirit helps you to pray when you do not know what to pray (Rom. 8:26).

Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. Romans 8:26-27

5. When you pray in tongues, the Holy Spirit helps you to pray according to the will of God (Rom. 8:27).

Praying in tongues is something that you can do throughout the day (I Cor. 14:18).

I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all...

III. If we are to walk in victory, we must be continually filled with the Holy Spirit.

- A. The believer has three significant encounters with the Holy Spirit that all help the believer to achieve destiny.

If we are to receive the full benefit of these experiences, we must understand the purpose of and the distinction between each of them.

1. The believer is to be born of the Spirit.

Being born of the Spirit is a **one-time experience**.

- a. It is necessary for entrance into the Kingdom of God (John 3:5).

- b. It is associated with the new or spiritual birth (John 3:3).
- c. It occurs when we repent of our sins and acknowledge the lordship of Christ (Rom. 10:8-13).
- d. In it the Holy Spirit is joined to our human spirit and we become a child of God and the temple of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 3:16-17; 6:17; II Cor. 6:16).
- e. The evidence that we have been born of the Spirit is the inner witness of the Spirit that we are the children of God (Rom. 8:16).
- f. The outcome or fruit of this experience is the fruit of the Spirit functioning in our lives.

Being born of the Spirit focuses primarily on the **character of Christ**.

2. The believer is to be baptized with or in the Spirit (Luke 3:16; Acts 1:5).

We have already discussed this in an earlier point, but for our purposes here we note that being baptized in or with the Spirit is also a **one-time experience** with the primary focus being the **ability or the power of Christ**.

3. The believer is to be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18-19)

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord...

- a. Being filled is a command, imperative, “Be filled!”

This means that this is something that we are to go after as believers. We actually have a responsibility to be filled.

- b. Being filled is to be continual, “Keep on being filled!”

This is not just to be something that we go after when we are desperate or running on empty spiritually. This is actually meant to be a lifestyle.

- c. It parallels the oil in relation to the lampstand in the Tabernacle of Moses (Ex. 25:31-40; 35:14; 39:37).

There was an initial filling of the lamps, but after that there was a daily filling or refueling so that the oil would burn and not the wick. The light from the lamp was to burn continually (Ex. 27:20-21).

- B. The only one of these three encounters that is meant to be an ongoing experience is

that of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Being filled with the Spirit is an **ongoing experience**.

1. It has been confused with the baptism of the Spirit because it is often mentioned in the same context.
2. It is available to anyone who is in covenant relationship with God in both the Old and New Testaments (Ex. 38:3; Luke 1:15, 41).
3. It involves the Holy Spirit filling the heart and mind of the believer so that every thought, determination and action is under the pervading influence and direction of the Holy Spirit.

Note: When something is filled it is completely taken up in, saturated by and permeated with.

4. It is to be a continual and daily experience of the believer (Eph. 5:18-19).
5. The fruit of this experience is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost (Rom. 14:17; Acts 6:15; 7:55).

Being filled with the Spirit has the primary focus of providing the fuel for long-term **endurance**.

Note: Being filled with the Spirit often occurs simultaneously with the other two experiences (Acts 2:1-4).

C. The believer needs to be filled with the Spirit to walk in complete victory.

Why we need to believe for this?

1. The routines of life can drain us of spiritual vitality and energy.
2. The attacks of the enemy can deplete us (Jesus, tempted of the devil).
3. The special challenges that each day holds can blind-side us.
4. The opposition from unbelievers can discourage us (Acts 4:23ff.).

D. There are many marks of a believer who has been filled with the Holy Spirit.

1. There is a greater boldness in your witness (Acts. 4:31; 11:24).

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

2. There is a heightened sensitivity to operate in the gifts of the Spirit (Acts 6:8).

And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.

3. There is a fuller release of encouragement from you to others (Eph. 4:18-19).

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord...

4. There is a greater effectiveness in all of your work (Acts 6:3, 5).

5. There is greater freedom and liberty in the Holy Spirit (II Cor. 3:17).

Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty

6. There is more authority to challenge the works of darkness (Acts. 13:9).

But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. 9 Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him 10 and said, "O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? 11 And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time." And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand. 12 Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord. Acts 13:8-12

7. There is a greater ease in fulfilling Christian obligations (e.g. forgiving others) (Acts 7:55-60).

E. What is the path to the continual filling of the Holy Spirit?

1. We must recognize that we have a need (Mt. 5:3; Acts 4:29).

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

2. We must take the initiative (Eph. 5:18-19).

3. We must hunger and thirst (Ps. 107:9; Mt. 5:6).

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.

4. We must ask (Luke 11:13).

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!

5. We must do this daily (Eph. 5:18-19).

Lesson 15-17

Christianity Based on Receiving and Extending Forgiveness

Victorious Christianity is Christianity based on an understanding of the issues of forgiveness and how they relate to our life as believers. This includes God's forgiveness of us, our forgiveness of those who have wronged us and our forgiveness of ourselves.

I. What do we know about God that serves as a foundation to our understanding of forgiveness?

A. God is omniscient or all-knowing.

This means the following:

1. He sees all that occurs in every place and keeps watch upon the evil and the good (Pro. 15:3).
2. He knows everything that occurs in nature (Ps. 147:4; Mt. 6:8; 10:29).
3. He knows the ways of man (Ps. 33:13-15; Pro. 5:21).
4. He knows all of the deeds and experiences of man (Ps. 139:2-3).
5. He knows all of man's words (Ps. 139:4).
6. He knows all of man's sorrows (Ex. 3:7).
7. He knows our thoughts (Ps. 139:1-2).
8. He knows for all eternity what will be for all eternity (Acts 15:18).

Known to God from eternity are all His works.

B. God is a forgiving God.

In this revelation of God I would like to focus not on what God knows but on what God does not know. To do this I would like to look at a part of God's nature and one of His titles that can bring real strength and freedom to us as believers—God, the Forgiving God.

There are many verses that present God as a God of mercy and forgiveness. Many of these verses challenge some of our concepts of our holy God.

1. Exodus 34:6-7

And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no

means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation.”

When God revealed Himself to Moses, the first thing that God wanted Moses to know about Him was that He is a merciful and gracious God. Not that God simply overlooks sin in our lives, but God wants us to know that He is approachable as a loving heavenly Father.

2. Nehemiah 9:17

They refused to obey, and they were not mindful of Your wonders that You did among them. But they hardened their necks, and in their rebellion they appointed a leader to return to their bondage. But you God are ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in kindness, and did not forsake them.

Even though man is stubborn and rebellious toward God, God is not like us. He is not about to forsake His people and is eager to forgive them the moment they come to their senses and come back to Him.

3. Psalm 32:1-5

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,” And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.

Keeping our sins internalized does nothing for our personal health and well-being. As soon as we open up to God in repentance God is eager to extend forgiveness to us.

4. Psalm 86:1-5, 15

Bow down Your ear, O LORD, hear me; for I am poor and needy. Preserve my life, for I am holy; You are my God; save Your servant who trusts in You! Be merciful to me, O Lord, for I cry to You all day long. Rejoice the soul of Your servant, for to You, O Lord, I lift up my soul. For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You...15 But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth.

God is ever ready to forgive when we but call upon Him.

5. Psalm 103:1-18

Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. The LORD executes righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed. He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel. The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, so the LORD pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children, to such as keep His covenant, and to those who remember His commandments to do them.

6. Psalm 130

Out of the depths I have cried to You, O LORD; Lord, hear my voice! Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in His word I do hope. My soul waits for the Lord More than those who watch for the morning--Yes, more than those who watch for the morning. O Israel, hope in the LORD; for with the LORD there is mercy, and with Him is abundant redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities."

If God was in the habit of keeping track of all of our sins and iniquities there is not one of us that could stand before Him. But God is a God of forgiveness who is abundant in mercy.

7. Isaiah 55:7

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.

There is such a thing as receiving pardon and then there is "abundant" pardon. This word could also be translated "thoroughly" pardon.

It is erased, not like a blackboard that you can faintly make out what was erased. It was taken away, not like a piece of paper on a pad that can be traced over and restored. It was deleted, not like a message on a computer that can be dug up later by experts. When God forgives or pardons us, that sin and all remembrance of that sin is gone, never to be retrieved again.

8. Micah 7:18-20

Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. You will give truth to Jacob and mercy to Abraham, which You have sworn to our fathers from days of old.

God actually delights in showing mercy. This is the fun part of His job.

9. Matthew 9:1-8

So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city. Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you." And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, "This Man blasphemes!" But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"--then He said to the paralytic, "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." And he arose and departed to his house. Now when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men.

Sometimes the need to know that are sins are forgiven is greater than being freed from physical discomfort. Jesus knew that there was something internal that was troubling this man. He knew for this man his internal healing was more important than his physical healing.

10. Acts 13:38-39

Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.

11. Ephesians 1:3-8

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame

before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence.

12. Colossians 2:13-15

And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

God did an interesting thing when it came to our sins. The devil is the accuser of the brethren and wants to bring all of us under condemnation in order to keep us paralyzed in relation to the purposes of God. However, to remove the teeth from the devil, God forgave us our sins. Now the devil has nothing to use against us unless he can deceive us into believing that we are not forgiven.

In all of these verses we have seen that God is a forgiving God. He is a God of love, mercy and compassion Who is eager and even anxious to forgive His people.

So much did God want to convince us of this that He sent Jesus to preach remission of sins. Jesus likewise sent the apostles to tell men that their sins could be forgiven.

The good news of the Gospel is not that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Man’s conscience bears witness to that. The good news is that there is forgiveness of sins.

II. What is the nature of God’s forgiveness?

God has a unique ability. With all of His essential attributes, He is able to actually purposefully forget. The God Who is all-powerful, everywhere-present and all-knowing does not know everything.

- A. The nature of God’s forgiveness is seen in the phrases that He uses to describe His forgiveness.

When He forgives our sins, He—

1. Remembers our sins no more (Jer. 31:34).
2. Removes our sins as far from Him as the east is from the west (Ps. 103:12).

“As the east and the west can never meet in one point, but be for ever at the same distance from each other, so our sins and their decreed punishment are removed to an eternal distance by his mercy.” --*Clark’s Commentary*

“They are so removed that they cannot affect us any more. We are safe from all condemnation for our sins, as if they had not been committed at all.”

--*Barnes’ Notes*

“...so as no longer to affect our relations to Him.” --*JFB Commentary*

3. Casts our sins into the depths of the sea, never to be retrieved again (Mic. 7:18-20).

“...perhaps there may be some allusion to the Egyptians drowned in the Red sea; and what is cast into the sea, especially into the depths of it, is irrecoverable, not to be fetched up again, nor does it rise more; and so it is with the sins of God’s people, forgiven for Christ’s sake, even ‘all’ of them; for they have all been bore by Christ, and are covered, blotted out, and pardoned, not one remains unforgiven.” *John Gill’s Exposition of the Bible*

Even in our world when you want to dispose of something so that it can never be retrieved, you go to the deepest part of the ocean where no man can survive and drop it there.

B. The nature of God’s forgiveness is reflected in the definition of the word “forgive.”

1. The word “forgive: means “to cancel or pardon.”
2. To forgive is to absolve from liability to punishment for a crime or fault committed.
3. Forgiveness is the voluntary release of a person over which one has legal control.
4. When God forgives it does not mean that He temporarily suspends punishment which He may at some later time inflict.
5. God’s forgiveness is complete and it is eternal.

C. The nature of God’s forgiveness is reflected in the Presidential Pardon.

In the United States there is a prerogative that only the President has. It is called the “Presidential Pardon.”

God’s forgiveness is very much like the presidential pardon. There are five characteristics of a presidential pardon:

1. It must be exercised by one who has the power to pardon.
2. No other judge or magistrate can overturn the pardon.
3. The crime for which the pardon is granted is completely erased from all police or FBI records.
4. You can never be tried for that particular crime again.
5. That crime can never be held against you again.

In other words, it is just as if the crime never occurred. Even on a job application that asks for whether or not you have ever been convicted of a crime, you can legally say “NO!”

III. What are the conditions that we must meet to receive God’s pardon?

God is poised to forgive. But we must trigger that forgiveness by certain things. The six conditions for forgiveness include the following:

- A. We must call upon the Lord (Ps. 86:5).

The Lord is abundant in mercy to all who call upon Him.

Even though we have offended or sinned against others, we have first and foremost sinned against God (Ps. 51:4). Forgiveness depends on the one who has been sinned against.

Against you and you only have I sinned...

While we may have to go to others and seek forgiveness, our first step needs to be going to God. Only God can ultimately and eternally forgive sin.

- B. We must confess our sin (I John 1:9).

If we confess our sin, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

No one can be pardoned unless there is an admission that a crime has been committed. President Reagan was asked if he would be extending a pardon to Oliver North prior to his leaving office for what was termed “Iran-gate.” President Reagan replied, “There has been no verdict rendered that a crime has been committed, therefore, there is nothing to pardon.”

You must admit to a crime before pardon can be given.

- C. We must repent of our sin (Acts 8:22).

To do this you must have a change of heart and mind and godly sorrow for sin. We must see the damnable nature of what we have done.

- D. We must be willing to forsake our sin (Pro. 28:13).

Whosoever confesses and forsakes his sins will have mercy.

God's forgiveness is not a license to sin. We cannot presume upon God's mercy. It is not like the confession booth (live it up on Saturday night, go to confession on Sunday morning).

- E. We must be willing to forgive others (Ps. 18:25; Mt. 5:23-24; 6:12-15; Mark 11:25; Luke 6:37; Col. 3:13).

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. Colossians 3:12-14

We will come back to this later.

- F. We must accept the pardon.

God is gracious, but He will not force the acceptance of His grace upon man.

III. George Wilson

In 1829 George Wilson of Pennsylvania was sentenced to be hanged for robbing the mail and murder. President Andrew Jackson pardoned him but Wilson refused the pardon. Wilson indicated that the pardon was not valid unless it was accepted. The Supreme Court was called upon to decide the matter. Chief Justice John Marshall gave the following decision:

“A pardon is a piece of paper, the value of which depends upon its acceptance by the person implicated. It is hardly supposed that one under sentence of death would refuse to accept a pardon, but if it is refused, it is no pardon. George Wilson must be hanged!”

Accepting our forgiveness has to do with forgiving ourselves. Forgiveness is completed by our acceptance. If we do not accept God's forgiveness we stay in our prison house.

IV. How important is it for us to forgive others?

- A. Jesus indicated that we do not have a choice in the matter of forgiving others. It is our Christian duty to forgive (Mark 11:25). It is a command of Jesus.

And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

“Anything against anyone” is pretty inclusive.

- B. Jesus taught us that our forgiveness of others is a condition for our receiving God’s forgiveness.

1. He included this teaching in the Lord’s Prayer (Mt. 6:12; Luke 11:4).

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Matthew 6:12

“This is the invariable rule by which God dispenses pardon. He that comes before him unwilling to forgive, harboring dark and revengeful thoughts, how can he expect that God will show him that mercy which he is unwilling to show to others?” *Barnes’ Notes*

2. He emphasized it again on a number of occasions (Mt. 6:14-15; Mark 11:26; Luke 6:37).

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Matthew 6:14-15

But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Luke 6:35-37

- C. Jesus taught that we are to quickly forgive when those who have offended us repent (Luke 17:3-4).

Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, “I repent,” you shall forgive him.

This admonition of the Lord seems too easy, too quick. Surely we need to make people suffer a little more for what they have done. Surely we must make them wait

for our judgment or our forgiveness. After all...

Wait! Is that how you want God to forgive you?

- D. Jesus taught that we are to forgive without keeping accounts (Mt. 18:21-22; Luke 17:4).

Jesus had just finished talking about offenses in the local church and how to resolve them.

Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven." Matthew 18:21-22

In this context that disciples said, "Lord, increase our faith!" (Luke 17:5).

Actually if we are forgiving the way Jesus suggested that we forgive, we cannot keep track of the number of times the offense has happened. Once we forgive it the list is cleared and we go back to number one.

When we forgive, we are not to file the offense away in a safe place to be brought out again if needed. We are to burn the file.

- E. Jesus taught that forgiving others was not dependent upon their asking for our forgiveness (Mark 11:25).

And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

1. Jesus demonstrated this on the cross (Luke 23:34).

Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

2. Stephen demonstrated this at his stoning (Acts 7:60).

Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

We do not have to wait until we "feel like it" to forgive. This is a command of God and not subject to our feelings. I am sure that neither Jesus nor Stephen felt like forgiving at the time that they extended it. It is not hypocrisy to forgive when you don't feel like it. It is obedience and it is the smart thing to do. We do not forgive because we feel like it; we forgive as an offering to Christ based on our love for Him. We forgive because we are those who walk in the constant awareness that we are an object of totally undeserved forgiveness. We also forgive because when we do not forgive we live in torment.

F. Jesus taught that if we do not forgive we will experience negative fruit.

1. Our prayers will be hindered (Mark 11:25).

And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

2. Our gifts and ministries will be rendered ineffective (Mt. 5:23-24).

Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

God does not receive our gifts unless we are at peace with one another.

3. God will withdraw His forgiveness (Mt. 18:35).

So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.

4. The sins of others will remain unforgiven (John 20:23; II Cor. 2:7).

If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you refuse to forgive them, they are unforgiven. –NLT

In other words the negative fruit of the strained relationship will continue.

5. We will personally suffer and dwell in a prison house of our own making (Mt. 18:23-35).

Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. 25 But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. 26 The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, "Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all." 27 Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. 28 But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, "Pay me what you owe!" 29 So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you all." 30 And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. 31 So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. 32 Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt

because you begged me. 33 Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?" 34 And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. 35 So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.

Jesus told the parable of the unforgiving servant. From this parable we learn many things:

- a. There is no possible way that we could ever repay God the debt that we owe to him.
 - b. The forgiveness that we received from God is totally undeserved because our debt was real.
 - c. What others owe to us is totally insignificant when compared to the debt that we owed to God.
 - d. By not extending forgiveness to others we demonstrate a lack of true appreciation for and gratitude concerning God's unspeakable gift to us.
 - e. God is further offended when we do not reciprocate His generosity. We are viewed as a "wicked" servant.
 - f. When we refuse to forgive, this implies that God will withdraw His forgiveness from us.
6. We will experience the fruit of bitterness (Heb. 12:14-15).

Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled...

When we do not forgive others physiologically and psychologically we experience some negative reactions. This has been demonstrated from a medical point of view.

- High blood pressure
- Increased levels of stress
- Hostility in relationships
- Anger and intolerance
- Increased heart rate
- Higher instance of substance abuse
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Difficulty in developing wholesome friendships

- Headaches and chronic pain
- Inability to commit to others

Is this where you want to live?

V. What does it mean to extend forgiveness to others?

Extending God’s forgiveness means several things:

A. It means that we express our forgiveness to them in words.

It is not a matter of just being nice to them or buying them a sweet gift. The words must be said to bring a completion and finality to the act of forgiveness.

B. It means that we refuse to bring the matter up to the offending party again.

This means no overt comments or subtle reminders especially when they fail you again. No statements like, “There you go again...”

C. It means that we treat the offending party as if it had never happened.

D. It means that we refuse to talk to others about it anymore.

We shouldn’t have been talking to others about it in the first place unless the talk was moving toward an honest solution. But the offense should never come up in our conversation again. If others bring it up we should make sure that we let them know that all is well and proceed to shut the conversation down.

E. It means that we refuse to dwell on the offense in our minds.

We will come back to this point later.

VI. How can we effectively receive God’s forgiveness and forgive ourselves?

Forgiving ourselves is just as important as forgiving others. Paul indicated that in order for us to win the race that we are running, we must have the ability to forget some things (Phil. 3:12-15). We have to be able to forget the past and move forward into the future.

Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.¹³ Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,¹⁴ I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Therefore let us, as many as are

mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.

A. Forgetting is not a normal human ability (unless it is connected to a responsibility).

1. The dictionary defines the word “forget” in several ways.
 - a. To be unable to recall something that was previously known.
 - b. To fail to remember.
 - c. To fail to do something unintentionally or neglect.
 - d. To fail to take through forgetfulness.
 - e. To lose interest in or regard for; to overlook purposefully; to disregard.
 - f. To leave unmentioned or to fail to think of.

The last two meanings here reflect more of what Paul was referring to when he instructed us to “forget.”

2. The New Testament word for “forget” means “to neglect or no longer care for.”

B. Forgetting means that we are to no longer nurture certain things in our mind.

1. There are certain things that we are to disregard and no longer care for in our minds.
2. There are certain things that we are not to let predominate our thinking or thought life.
3. There are certain things upon which we are not to fix our attention or gaze.
4. There are certain things that we are not to cultivate, water or feed.
5. There are certain things that we must let starve to death for lack of nourishment.

C. Forgetting involves the discipline of one’s thought life.

When Paul talked of forgetting, he did so in the context of a runner in a race. If a runner is going to be successful he must be focused on the goal and not allow his mind to be dominated by things that can only hinder him. He cannot be thinking about where the other runners are or how far he has come or who is in the stands. He can’t be focusing on what his wife said to him last night or what he will have for dinner. He has to focus on the race that is set before him.

Paul had many things to forget when it came to his personal race, including:

1. Christians that he had persecuted to death (Acts 8:3; 22:4; Phil. 3:6).
2. Blasphemy that he had uttered against the Lord (I Tim. 1:13).

3. Assisting at the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:58; 8:1).
4. The rejection he experienced from the other apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 8:26).
5. The many disappointments, betrayals and heartaches caused by those to whom he ministered (II Cor. 4:8-12; II Tim. 1:15; 4:10).

Any one of these things could have been cared for and nurtured by Paul and could have hindered his progress or become a snare to him. Paul was not going to do this. He was going to look ahead. He made a conscious choice. He made it for the sake of his call and no one else could do it for him.

D. Forgetting means adopting the attitude of Joseph (Gen. 41:50-52).

And to Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On, bore to him. Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: "For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house." And the name of the second he called Ephraim: "For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."

1. Joseph had to learn to forget his toil.
 - a. The word here used for "toil" literally means the following:
 - Heavy weary labor to the point of exhaustion.
 - The produce of labor.
 - Weariness, trouble, vexation.
 - Sorrow
 - b. The toil that Joseph had to forget involved bad experiences and betrayals.

There were times when it seemed that all of life was against him.

- His brothers sold him into slavery.
- Potiphar's wife made false accusations against him.
- Potiphar (whom he had served faithfully) put him into a common prison.
- The butler broke his promise to him to put in a good word for him.

2. Joseph had to grow from the negative experiences and become fruitful.

Joseph had pressed on in every situation. He didn't blame God or others for his plight. He saw the hand of God in his circumstance and believed that God had a purpose for his life. He became fruitful in the land of his affliction.

3. Joseph's naming of his children indicated the work had been done.
 - a. His first child he named Manasseh (forgetting).

b. His second child he named Ephraim (doubly fruitful).

When he did see his brothers again, he had the power to retaliate but he did not (Gen. 45:1-8; 50:19-20).

Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive." Genesis 50:19-20

VII. What are the results of forgiveness?

When forgiveness is granted and received it brings forth some wonderful results. These results include:

- A. Justification (Acts 13:38-39). In other words we are justified before God and man. We can go forward just as if nothing had happened.
- B. Clearing of the Conscience (II Cor. 7:11). In other words we can be healed from within and the past does not need to leave its mark on us.
- C. Joy (Ps. 51:12). This means instead of bitterness there can be joy. The joy of our salvation returns.
- D. Restoration (Acts 3:19). This means that our relationship with God and our relationship with others are restored back to where they were prior to the offense.
- E. Love for God (Luke 7:36-48)

Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. 37 And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, 38 and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. 39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, "This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner." 40 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." So he said, "Teacher, say it." 41 "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have rightly judged." 44 Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. 45 You gave Me no

kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. 46 You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. 47 Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.” 48 Then He said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

There is no sin so gross nor so often repeated that it cannot be forgiven. Jesus admonition about forgiving “seventy times seven” reflects the heart of God when it comes to forgiveness. God’s forgiveness extends to such things as abortion, divorce, homosexuality, adultery, fornication, stealing, child abuse, failure in business, failure in parenting and failure in ministry.

Paul reminded the Christians in Corinth that they all came from troubled backgrounds (I Cor. 6:9-11).

Such were some of you...

Jesus reminded us that those who have been forgiven much, love much (Luke 7:47).

Those who have been forgiven much, love much.

Conclusion

Pray for people still in prison. Walk them through the conditions of forgiveness. Announce freedom and pardon to them.

Lesson 18-20

Christianity Based on a Tamed Tongue

If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.

James 3:2b

We all make many mistakes, but those who control their tongues can also control themselves in every other way. –NLT

I. The Bible has a lot to say about the tongue.

A. The Book of Psalms has something to say about the tongue.

1. Psalm 34:12-13

Who is the man who desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit.

2. Psalm 39:1

I said, "I will guard my ways, lest I sin with my tongue; I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle, while the wicked are before me."

3. Psalm 52:1-5

Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man? The goodness of God endures continually. 2 Your tongue devises destruction, like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. 3 You love evil more than good, lying rather than speaking righteousness. 4 You love all devouring words, you deceitful tongue. 5 God shall likewise destroy you forever; He shall take you away, and pluck you out of your dwelling place, and uproot you from the land of the living. Selah

4. Psalm 139:3-4

You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.

B. The Book of Proverbs has something to say about the tongue.

1. Proverbs 6:16-19

These six things the LORD hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked

plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren.

2. Proverbs 12:17-19

He who speaks truth declares righteousness, but a false witness, deceit. There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health. The truthful lip shall be established forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment.

3. Proverbs 21:23

Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles.

4. Proverbs 8:6-9

Listen, for I will speak of excellent things, and from the opening of my lips will come right things; 7 For my mouth will speak truth; wickedness is an abomination to my lips. 8 All the words of my mouth are with righteousness; nothing crooked or perverse is in them. 9 They are all plain to him who understands, and right to those who find knowledge.

5. Proverbs 13:3

He who guards his mouth preserves his life, but he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction.

C. Jesus had something to say about the tongue.

A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.

Matthew 12:25-37

D. James had something to say about the tongue (Jam. 3:1-12).

My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. 2 For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. 3 Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. 4 Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. 5 Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. 7

For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. 8 But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. 10 Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. 11 Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? 12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.

1. James indicates that that even though the tongue is small in comparison to the rest of a person's body, it is a most powerful force.
 - a. Just like a small bit in the mouth of a large horse it is able to rein in or control the whole body.
 - b. Just like the small rudder of a massive ship it is able to set the course of a person's journey.
 - c. Just like a single spark or small flame it is able to set on fire the course of nature and burn down what took years to develop.

As fire it can be a great blessing when harnessed, the tongue can be a source of great blessing. However, when it is not harnessed it can become an instrument of hell itself leaving death and destruction in its path.

2. James indicates that the tongue is a most difficult thing to tame.

Every kind of animal has been tamed and brought under the control of man. The tongue is more difficult to tame than all of them.

3. James indicates that the tongue can be a source of great blessing or it can be an unruly source of cursing.
 - a. On the blessing side it can be a spring of living water to bring refreshment for many. With it we can bless God.
 - b. On the cursing side it can be a stagnant pool of bitter or salt water—a world of iniquity, full of deadly poison. With it we can curse those who have been made in the image of God (Pro. 11:9a).

The hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor...

II. The tongue is a powerful force for good or evil (Pro. 18:21).

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

A. On the positive side

1. It promotes health (Pro. 12:18, NIV).

Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

2. It is to be filled with the law of kindness (Pro. 31:26).

She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness.

3. It speaks things characterized by excellence (Pro. 8:6).

Listen, for I will speak of excellent things, and from the opening of my lips will come right things...

4. It feeds many (Pro. 10:21).

The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of wisdom.

5. It imparts grace (Eph. 4:29).

Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

6. It brings deliverance (Pro. 12:6).

The words of the wicked are like a murderous ambush, but the words of the godly save lives. —NLT

B. On the negative side

1. It pours forth foolishness (Pro. 15:2).

The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, but the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness.

2. It breaks the spirit (Pro. 15:4).

A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.

Kind words heal and help; cutting words wound and maim. —MSG

3. It destroys people (Pro. 11:9).

Evil words destroy one's friends; wise discernment rescues the godly. —NLT

III. The tongue is compared to many things.

A. On the negative side

1. Sharp sword (Ps. 57:4; 64:3)
2. Bitter words are as arrows (Ps. 64:3; Jer. 9:8)
3. Poisonous snake (Ps. 140:3)
4. Devouring fire (Is. 30:27; Jam. 3:6)

B. On the positive side

1. Choice silver (Pro. 10:20)
2. Tree of life (Pro. 15:4)
3. Fountain of life (Pro. 10:11)

IV. There are several ways in which the tongue can be used.

A. We are to avoid the negative uses of the tongue.

There are at least twenty one negative uses of the tongue as described in the Bible.

1. Talebearing or Revealing Secret (Pro. 11:13; 18:8; 20:19; 26:20, 22).

A talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter.
Proverbs 11:13

The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, and they go down into the inmost body. Proverbs 18:8

Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; and where there is no talebearer, strife ceases. Proverbs 26:20

A talebearer can be defined as one who habitually goes about telling others those things that were told him in confidence.

Questions?

Do I chatter unthinkingly with others about those things that were meant to be kept in confidence with the person who shared them with us?

Do I find it very difficult not to open my mouth about things which I committed myself not to talk about?

2. Hasty or Rash Words (Pro. 29:20; Eccl. 5:2-3)

Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.
Proverbs 29:20

Someone who is hasty or rash speaks of things before he has given sufficient time to thoroughly understand the information about which he is going to speak.

At times this involves making promises or commitments to do things without counting the cost involved in making such a commitment. People who have this problem have let many down (e.g. parents, children, spouses, pastors and employers).

Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil. 2 Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; therefore let your words be few. 3 For a dream comes through much activity, and a fool's voice is known by his many words. 4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; for He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed--5 Better not to vow than to vow and not pay. Ecclesiastes 5:1-5

Questions?

Is my brain engaged before putting my mouth into gear?

Do I repeat things that I hear at home, school, work or church without thinking through the implications of my comments and with whom I am speaking?

Do I make hasty promises to people about what I will do and won't do to placate them when I feel under pressure to perform?

3. Idle Words (Mt. 12:35-36)

But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.

Someone speaks idle words when they speak words that have no real function or have meanings that fail to communicate the intended thought. It can also refer to careless words.

Questions?

Do I find myself talking just for the sake of talking?

Do I speak about important issues even when I have very little or no knowledge about what I am talking about?

4. Cursing (Ps. 10:7; 59:12; Rom. 3:14)

For the sin of their mouth and the words of their lips, let them even be taken in their pride, and for the cursing and lying which they speak. Psalm 59:12

Cursing is speech that invokes evil or the hope of calamity upon another person.

Questions?

When I see someone of my own peer level being prospered, do I say things that would undermine or help to destroy God's blessing on their life?

After being hurt by someone, do I give indications through my speech that I want evil returned to that person in recompense for the hurt I have received?

What about minced oaths?

Actually this area of cursing or profanity is an interesting area. Many of us may be using offensive words or profanity without even realizing it.

We would not use words like...

"Damn" but we might use words like "darn, dang or drat."

"God damn it" but we might use words like "gosh darn it or guldangit."

"Hell" but we might use words like "heck."

"Jesus" but we might use words like "Gee or Jeez."

"By God" but we might use words like "by Jove or by gosh."

"Jesus Christ" but we might use a phrase like "Judas Priest."

These substitute words in our language are sometimes called euphemisms or minced oaths.

A euphemism is the substitution of a less offensive word phrase for a more offensive word or phrase.

A minced oath is an oath that has been cut or severed and is used in an abbreviated or altered form (e.g. Gee or Jesus).

If you go to a dictionary for the meaning of some of these words, this is what you will find:

- Gee (capitalized in dictionary), "A form of Jesus used in minced oaths."
- Golly, "A euphemism for God, used in minced oaths."
- Gosh, "As substitute for God, used in minced oaths."
- Darn, A colloquial euphemism for damn."

I wonder if it would be honoring to God to weed some of these things out of our vocabulary. But what do you say when you crack your knuckles? “Ouch!”

In the dictionary “ouch” means:

- An expression of one’s own physical pain.

“Ouch! You stepped on my toe! That hurt!”

- An expression in sympathy at another’s pain.

“Ouch! Her sunburn looks awful.”

- A reply to an insult (frequently one that is tongue-in-cheek or joking).

“Ouch. How could you say that?”

- An expression of disappointment.

“Ouch, I really wanted to do that.”

5. Reviling or Railing (I Cor. 5:11; 6:10)

But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner--not even to eat with such a person. I Corinthians 5:11

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. I Corinthians 6:10

Reviling is speaking to or about another person in a reproachful way, bringing shame, disgrace or discredit to them.

Question?

When I see a problem in a fellow Christian’s life, do I try to assist them to remedy the problem or do I expose them in front of others and bring shame upon them?

6. Backbiting (Ps. 15:3; Pro. 25:23; Rom. 1:30; II Cor. 12:20)

LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart; he who does not backbite with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor does he take up a reproach against his friend... Psalm 15:1-3

Backbiting is speaking evil or repeating stories about an individual in their absence that would have the effect of destroying or putting into question their character or spirituality.

Question?

Do I talk about another person's failures or inadequacies in public without any thought of how this might affect their reputation?

7. Gossip or Whispering (Pro. 16:27-28; Rom. 1:29; II Cor. 12:20)

An ungodly man digs up evil, and it is on his lips like a burning fire. A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends. Proverbs 16:28

Gossip is the same as backbiting but it focuses its venom on one person at a time.

8. Slander or Malice (Pro. 10:18; Col. 3:8; I Pet. 2:12)

Whoever hides hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool.

Proverbs 10:18

But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Colossians 3:8

Slander involves spreading an evil report, false charges, misrepresentations or half truths that defame or damage another person's reputation.

Question?

When I am angry with another person, do I make up stories that would make him or her look bad?

9. Unwholesome, Rotten or Worthless Communication (Eph. 4:29)

Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them. –NLT

Unwholesome talk involves using language or words that are crude, low or worthless in character and not fit for use in sanctified conversation.

Questions?

Do I use words in my vocabulary that are crude and offensive to others?

Do I use words or language that carries filthy undertones?

10. Bitterness (Eph. 4:31)

Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.

Bitterness is listed here along with other forms of unacceptable speech.

Bitterness as it relates to speech is using words or phrases which display inward feelings of being irritated, agitated, bitter or grieved with another person.

Questions?

Do I say things that make it clear to others that I have been deeply offended?

Do I say things that openly show that I have not forgiven others?

11. Course Jestering (Eph. 5:3-4)

But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes--these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God. –NLT

Course jesting is joking about things that are abusive, offensive and low in decency that are not suitable or fitting for any occasion.

Questions?

Has my speech been redeemed from the world system?

Do I easily adopt world phrases and slogans that are void of truth or related to unredeemed culture?

12. Complaining, Grumbling or Murmuring (I Cor. 10:10; Phil. 2:14-15)

Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world...

Philippians 2:14-15

Complaining is privately or openly expressing displeasure or discontentment about a matter including matters that are only under God's control.

Questions?

Do I secretly and inwardly grumble about those in authority?

Do I express discontentment about matters just because my will did not prevail in the situation?

13. Arguing or Disputing (Rom. 14:1; Phil. 2:14)

Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things.
Romans 14:1

Arguing is participating in argumentative, contradictive and destructive reasonings that are coupled with hostility and contention.

Questions?

Do I involve myself in discussions which I know will lead to heated disagreements?

Do I persist to wrangle about words when I believe I am right and others are wrong?

14. Filthy Language (Col. 3:8)

But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.

Filthy language is language that is dirty, obscene and shameful which disregards decency and moral purity.

Question?

Do I talk about members of the opposite sex in shameful and impure ways?

Do I tend to turn everything into something impure or vile?

15. Lying (Pro. 12:22; Col. 3:9; Eph. 4:25)

Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, but those who deal truthfully are His delight. Proverbs 12:22

Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds...
Colossians 3:9

Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another. Ephesians 4:25

Lying is twisting, distorting and misrepresenting the true facts in any context with the intention of deceiving the listener.

Questions?

Do I tend to exaggerate things out of proportion to what they actually are to leave an inaccurate impression of myself or others?

Do I find it easy to lie to others when I know that it will benefit me in some way to do so?

16. Flattery (Ps. 5:9; 12:2-3; 78:36; Pro. 20: 19; 26:28; 29:5; I Th. 2:5).

Help, LORD, for the godly man ceases! For the faithful disappear from among the sons of men. They speak idly everyone with his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak. May the LORD cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaks proud things... Psalm 12:1-3

A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet. Proverbs 29:5

He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with one who flatters with his lips. Proverbs 20:19

For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness--God is witness. I Thessalonians 2:5

Flattery is usually a cloak put over a hidden agenda to disguise it.

Flattery is the speaking of insincere compliments or adulations to a person with the intention of selfish gain or interest.

Questions?

Do I say nice things about people because it will benefit me in the long run?

Are the compliments that I am giving genuine or are they motivated by self promotion?

17. Contentious or Quarrelsome (Pro. 21:25; 25:24; 26:21; Luke 22:24; I Cor. 11:16)

Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; and where there is no talebearer, strife ceases. As charcoal is to burning coals, and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to kindle strife. Proverbs 26:20-21

The New Testament word literally means a “lover of strife.”

To be contentious is to intentionally stir up strife and competition between individuals simply for the sake of argument. It can include intentionally “pushing people’s buttons” because we love to see them react.

Questions?

Do I say things that I know will cause another person what to fight back verbally?

Are there certain subjects that I like to get people stirred up about just for the sport of it?

18. Clamor (Eph. 4:31)

Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.

Clamor is using loud, obnoxious or boisterous tones with another person usually resulting from anger. It is akin to yelling or screaming to make your case heard.

Question?

When I am losing an argument, do I find it easy to try to shout down my opposition because I can?

Do I talk down to people in aggravated tones when I think that I am superior to them?

19. Striving about Words (II Tim. 2:14)

Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers.

Striving about words is when a person continually argues about petty meanings and definitions that are of no ultimate consequence in the communication process.

Questions?

Am I more concerned about correct words than about genuinely hearing what another person has to say?

Do I argue about every idea and pick flaws with every person who has a different viewpoint to mine?

20. Godless Chatter or Idle Babblings (I Tim. 6:20; II Tim. 2:16)

O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge--by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. I Timothy 6:20-21

*But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.
II Timothy 2:16*

Godless chatter or profane and idle babblings refer to empty, fruitless and heathen-like discussions that invariably have absolutely no positive result.

Question?

At the end of a conversation do you feel something significant has taken place?

21. Sowing Discord (Pro. 6:14, 19; Acts 20:30; Gal. 5:20, NIV; I Tim. 5:13)

Here is a description of worthless and wicked people: They are constant liars, signaling their true intentions to their friends by making signs with their eyes and feet and fingers. Their perverted hearts plot evil. They stir up trouble constantly. But they will be destroyed suddenly, broken beyond all hope of healing. There are six things the LORD hates--no, seven things he detests: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that kill the innocent, a heart that plots evil, feet that race to do wrong, a false witness who pours out lies, a person who sows discord among brothers. Proverbs 6:12-19, NLT

And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not. I Timothy 5:13

Sowing discord is when someone intentionally undermines the unity of brethren by spreading innuendoes, half-truths and other lies for the purpose of separating one person (or persons) from another.

Question?

When I have been offended or I do not agree with decisions of those in authority do I share my concerns with others with a view to getting others to side with me against the leadership?

B. We are to cultivate the positive uses of the tongue.

1. We are to speak of His righteousness and praise all the day long (Ps. 35:28; 51:14; 66:17; 71:23-24).

My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing to You, and my soul, which You have redeemed. My tongue also shall talk of Your righteousness all the day long...

Psalm 71:23-24

2. We are to speak words of wisdom (Ps. 37:30; Pro. 10:31).

The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, and his tongue talks of justice.

Psalm 37:30

3. We are to speak gracious words or words filled with grace (Eccl. 10:12; Col. 4:6).

The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious, but the lips of a fool shall swallow him up... Ecclesiastes 10:12

4. We are to speak words seasoned with salt (Col. 4:6).

Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

Salt in the biblical cultures was an important commodity and an element of monetary exchange. Salt was particularly valuable because of the properties that it has.

- a. It is essential for life.
- b. It is a symbol of purity (white and clean).
- c. It is a preservative (staving off corruption).
- d. It is a flavor enhancer (Job 6:6).
- e. It is antiseptic or healing.

4. We are to speak words that edify, encourage and lift up (Eph. 4:29; I Th. 5:11)

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. Ephesians 4:29, NIV

5. We are to speak the word of the Lord (Ps. 119:172).

The important thing to understand is that God wants to use our mouths to be witnesses of Him to the nations, to preach the Gospel and the lead men and woman to Christ. God wants to guide this “unruly member” and use it for His kingdom and glory.

V. **There are some important things we can do to tame the tongue.**

While James seemed to indicate that no one can tame the tongue (Jam. 3:8), that which is impossible for men is possible with God (Luke 18:27).

A. In order to tame the tongue we must have a desire to tame the tongue (Ps. 17:3, NIV).

Though you probe my heart and examine me at night, though you test me, you will find nothing; I have resolved that my mouth will not sin.

1. This means acknowledging where we have failed and repent.
2. This means that we ask for God's help to change.
3. This means that we take responsibility for the wrongful things that we have said to others.
4. This means that we apologize to those we have offended by our words.
5. This means that we are willing to ask others to help us identify offensive speech patterns (Pro. 27:6, 17).

As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.

Proverbs 27:17

6. This means that we must make good on past promises that we have made to others.

B. In order to tame the tongue we must take personal responsibility for the words we speak and realize that God holds us accountable for every word that comes out of our mouth (Mt. 12:36).

When we understand this we will...

1. Think before we speak. This means listening to our words through the ears of others before we speak.
2. Set a guard or a sentinel in front of the door of our mouth (Ps. 141:3; Pro. 13:3; 21:23).

Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips.

Psalm 141:3

He who guards his mouth preserves his life, but he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction. Proverbs 13:3

Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles.

Proverbs 21:23

3. Discern the reactions of others before, during and after we speak (Ps. 55:20-21).

As for this friend of mine, he betrayed me; he broke his promises. His words are as smooth as cream, but in his heart is war. His words are as soothing as lotion, but underneath are daggers!

- C. In order to tame the tongue we must deal with our mind (II Cor. 10:4-5).

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ...

1. We must understand that what comes out of our mouth is actually a reflection of what is in our heart and mind (Mt. 12:34-37).

Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.

2. We must understand that our mind and our mouth are somehow connected (Josh. 1:8; Rom. 10:10).

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it.

3. We must have right meditations (Ps. 19:14)

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.

- D. In order to tame the tongue we must be willing to test our words before we speak them.

The eightfold test for the tongue (Phil. 4:8).

1. Is it true? Will it give an accurate impression?

2. Is it honorable? Should it be imitated by others?
3. Is it right? Is it appropriate to say at this time?
4. Is it pure? Is it motivated by pride or selfishness?
5. Is it lovely? Will it brighten the lives of those who hear it?
6. Is it of good repute? Will it damage anyone's reputation?
7. Is it characterized by excellence? Will it motivate others to be excellent?
8. Is it worthy of praise? Will it edify all who hear it?

--Adapted from Bill Gothard, *Instructions for Our Most Important Battle*

- E. In order to tame the tongue we must be not receive an evil report that is carried by others.

“An evil report involves distortion of facts or false information. It is given with wrong motivations and causes the hearer to come to inaccurate conclusions and to respond with unscriptural solutions.” --Bill Gothard

Just like contracting a virus, it is easy to become infected by an evil report. The stages of a disease are the same as the stages of defilement by an evil report.

The following material is summarized from notes by Bill Gothard's *Institutes in Basic Youth Conflicts*, 1981.

1. Stage One: Ignorance of Preventive Measures

...lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.

II Corinthians 2:11

Ignorance is not being aware of the destructive power of untrue or distorted words.

- a. Ignorance of how words destroy close friendships (Pro. 17:9).
- b. Ignorance of how the unclean defile the clean (Hag. 2:11-14).
- c. Ignorance of what constitutes an evil report.

An evil report is an unauthorized, distorted or false report which influences us to form an evil opinion about another person.

- d. Ignorance of how evil reports are given.

Evil reports are communicated by words, facial expressions, gestures and tonal patterns. They can be subtle or obvious, quiet or angry, sweet or bitter.

- e. Ignorance of who gives evil reports.

Potentially an evil report may come through any other person because of the fallen nature that we all possess. Evil reports come through the means of the twenty one sins of the tongue that we discussed previously.

- f. Ignorance of how susceptible we are to evil reports (Pro. 18:8).

The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, and they go down into the inmost body.

The truth is we are all vulnerable because there is something in all of us that enjoys hearing about the dirt on someone else.

- g. Ignorance of how Satan uses evil reports.

- To discredit spiritual leadership.
- To cause Christians to close their spirit to each other.
- To multiply conflicts and produce more ungodliness.
- To undermine the work of Christ in the world today.

2. Stage Two: Exposure to Someone who is Infected

A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself; the simple pass on and are punished. Proverbs 27:12

Exposure is entering into conversation with a person who is a carrier of an evil report.

- a. How to detect a carrier of an evil report

- A carrier will usually test your spirit before giving you an evil report to see if you have a compatible spirit or will take the bait.
- A carrier will check your acceptance of his report by giving you a small bit and observing how you react.
- A carrier will often get you to ask for the report by arousing your curiosity.
- A carrier will present themselves as somewhat of an authority in private matters which will cause you to believe what they say.

- b. Questions to ask a carrier before listening to their report

- What is your reason for telling me?
- Where did you get your information?

- Have you gone to those directly involved?
- Have you personally checked out all of the facts?
- Can I quote you if I check this out for myself?
- Would you be willing to write down your comment and sign it?

3. Stage Three: Contamination or Defilement by the Same Virus

Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled...

Hebrews 12:14-15

Defilement or contamination is receiving an evil report from another person and believing that it is true.

An evildoer gives heed to false lips; a liar listens eagerly to a spiteful tongue.

Proverbs 17:4

4. Stage Four: Infection as the Virus Overcomes the Body's Defenses

The simple believes every word, but the prudent considers well his steps.

Proverbs 14:15

Infection is responding to an evil report with human reasonings and emotions rather than with spiritual understanding and genuine love.

Symptoms of Infection

- a. Believing the evil report is true.
- b. Forming negative opinions based on that report.
- c. Focusing on the negative aspects of the person involved.
- d. Judging motives based on the evil report.
- e. Backing away from the person in your spirit.
- f. Telling others of the evil report.

5. Stage Five: The Full Blown Disease

Disease is being mentally and emotionally controlled by the evil report and becoming a carrier ourselves.

Symptoms of Disease

- a. Developing bitterness and/or rebellion even though the person involved did not directly offend us.
 - b. Sensing an obligation to warn as many as possible.
 - c. Looking with suspicion on others who are in similar areas of responsibility.
- F. In order to tame the tongue we must cleanse ourselves from the defilement caused by evil reports that we have entertained.

We cleanse ourselves of an evil report by doing the following:

1. Asking God to cleanse our mind from the evil report.
2. Asking God to give you a genuine love for the person involved in the report.
3. Refusing to tell another soul about the matter.
4. Talking to others that you may have contaminated.
5. Talking to the one who contaminated you.
6. If necessary seek out spiritual authorities to properly handle related matters.

Lesson 21-23

Christianity Based on Understanding Affliction

Some of the words that are part of the Christian life that are not the most exciting of words include affliction, suffering, persecution.

I. The victorious Christian life includes suffering and affliction.

A. There are several words that are associated with the concept of affliction.

1. These words include some of the following:

- Affliction
- Adversity
- Chastening
- Distress
- Opposition
- Persecution
- Pressure
- Purging
- Suffering
- Testing
- Tribulation
- Trials
- Trouble

2. None of these words minister very well to the feeling or emotional side of our lives (Ps. 32:4a).

For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me...

3. All of these words can be summarized with one phrase, “the dealings of God” (Heb. 12:7).

It is God dealing with us as sons and daughters.

If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?

B. There are different sources from which trials and tribulations may come.

1. They can come as a direct attack from the devil and his agents (Rev. 2:10).

2. They can come from other people who seek us harm (Acts 20:19).

3. They can come as a result of our own bad choices and decisions (Ps. 107:17).
4. They can come as part of God's agenda for our lives (Pro. 3:11-12).

My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor detest His correction; for whom the LORD loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights.

C. There are several passages of scripture that promise affliction as a part of our lives as Christians.

1. Hebrews 12:3-11

For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. 4 You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. 5 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; 6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." 7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. 11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

2. Hebrews 10:32-36, NLT

Don't ever forget those early days when you first learned about Christ. Remember how you remained faithful even though it meant terrible suffering. Sometimes you were exposed to public ridicule and were beaten, and sometimes you helped others who were suffering the same things. You suffered along with those who were thrown into jail. When all you owned was taken from you, you accepted it with joy. You knew you had better things waiting for you in eternity. Do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord, no matter what happens. Remember the great reward it brings you! Patient endurance is what you need now, so you will continue to do God's will. Then you will receive all that he has promised.

3. I Peter 4:12-16

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be

glad with exceeding joy. 14 If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. 16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

Problems do not indicate that you are out of the will of God (I Pet. 4:19).

Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

4. Psalm 34:19

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all.

5. I Thessalonians 3:1-3

Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith, that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this.

6. John 16:33

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

7. Acts 14:21-22

And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

II. There is a purpose for the dealings of God.

It is much easier to go through trials when we understand why we are going through them.

“Adversity can be our greatest motivation for spiritual growth or our deadliest means of discouragement. The difference depends on our understanding of God’s purposes through adversity.” –Bill Gothard, Alumni Supplement Volume 7, 1981, pg. 3

A. We need the dealings of God in our life.

1. We need the dealings of God because we have not arrived at perfection (Phil. 1:6, Amp.).

And I am convinced and sure of this very thing, that He Who began a good work in you will continue until the day of Jesus Christ [right up to the time of His return], developing [that good work] and perfecting and bringing it to full completion in you.

2. We need the dealings of God because there are hidden things in our life that keep us from perfection (Ps. 19:12b).

Cleanse me from secret faults.

3. We need the dealings of God because we often need motivation outside of ourselves to continue to progress toward perfection.

B. God has a purpose in His dealing with us.

1. God wants to change us into His image (II Cor. 3:18).

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

The word that is used in this passage for “transformed” is use four times in the New Testament and is the same word from which we get the English word “metamorphosis.”

It is used here and in Romans 12:1-2. The other two times it is used, it is used in connection with Jesus’ transfiguration. Think of what happened to Jesus on the mount when He was transfigured before them and the light of God’s glory shone through Him (Mt. 17:1-13). In the same way, God wants us to be reflectors of His light to the world. In order for this to happen we must be transformed.

- a. We need to go through a metamorphosis much like the caterpillar does so that it can become a beautiful butterfly.
 - The caterpillar is an earthbound creature that eats everything green and destroys things in its path.
 - The butterfly is a heavenly creature that is admired for its beauty and it reflects the glory of the sun.

- b. We need to go through the same kind of change that took place when a talent of gold was made into a beautiful lamp stand to bear light (Ex. 25:31-40). It was of beaten work.

You shall also make a lampstand of pure gold; the lampstand shall be of hammered work...all of it shall be one hammered piece of pure gold.

Exodus 25:31, 36b

2. God wants to purge out the dross from our lives (Is. 1:22, 25; Mal. 3:3).

I will turn My hand against you, and thoroughly purge away your dross, and take away all your alloy. Isaiah 1:25

I will turn my hand against you; I will thoroughly purge away your dross and remove all your impurities. –NIV

The smelting process looks a lot like what God does in our lives (Ps. 66:10).

For You, O God, have tested us; You have refined us as silver is refined.

- a. He digs us out of the quarry of this world as unrefined ore (Is. 51:1).
b. He puts us into the furnace of affliction and trials (Job 28:1; Is. 48:10).

Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. Isaiah 48:10

- c. He skims off the dross that is revealed by the process.
d. He stamps us with His inscription as a logo on a gold bar.
e. He sends it to the jeweler to make a beautiful piece of jewelry (Pro. 25:4).

Take away the dross from silver, and it will go to the silversmith for jewelry.

3. God wants to cleanse us and wash our garments (Mal. 3:2; Zech. 3:3-4).

But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like launderers' soap.

Malachi 3:2

The root for the word “launderer” or “fuller” (as in the King James Version) literally means to trample or stamp with the feet. Evidently that is how garments were cleansed. How often do you feel that you have been walked on or trampled down by the Lord.

The process of washing a garment in the biblical culture was a little different than it is today. The process included the following:

- a. Going down to the stream where water could be found.
 - b. Submerging the garment in water to moisten it fully.
 - c. Rubbing soap into the fabric (the soap was made from lard, an oily base).
 - d. Beating the fabric on a rock and hitting it with a club to loosen the stains.
 - e. Thoroughly rinsing the fabric in the running stream water.
 - f. Hanging the fabric in the sun to brighten and bleach it white.
4. God wants produce greater fruitfulness from our lives (John 15:1-2).

I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

God wants us to move from some fruit, to more fruit and on to much fruit (John 15:5, 8)

By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. John 15:8

The word used for “more” fruit refers to more in both quantity and quality. Apple trees that are never pruned eventually bring forth puny, spotted and unappetizing fruit.

The pruning process involves cutting away unproductive areas of our life. He is not just looking for leaves, he is looking for fruit (Mt. 21:19; John 15:16).

Now in the morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry. And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, “Let no fruit grow on you ever again.” Immediately the fig tree withered away.

Matthew 21:18-19

You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. John 15:16

5. God wants to prepare a vessel of honor for His service (Jer. 18:1-6).

The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying: 2 “Arise and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will cause you to hear My words.” 3 Then I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was, making something at the wheel. 4 And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he

made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make. 5 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying: 6 “O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?” says the LORD. “Look, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel!”

The Bible presents God as a potter and we are the clay in His hands (Is. 64:8).

But now, O LORD, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand. Isaiah 64:8

The Lord wants to make us into vessels of honor that will be suited to His use.

But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. II Timothy 2:20-21

The clay also went through a process before it could be used as a vessel of honor. This process involved sifting, spinning, pressure and fire.

- a. It had to be dug from the earth and sifted.
 - b. It had to be moistened and made into clay.
 - c. It had to be put on a spinning wheel.
 - d. It had to respond to the pressure of the potter’s hands both on the outside and the inside.
 - e. It had to go through the fire to be tempered and hardened.
 - f. If it cracked in the fire it was either thrown out or ground to powder to start the process over again.
6. God wants to bring enlargement to our lives (Ps. 4:1, Amp.).

Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness (uprightness, justice, and right standing with You)! You have freed me when I was hemmed in and enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me and hear my prayer.

The Hebrew word in this passage that is translated “enlarged” means “to broaden, to make wide, to make room or to open up.”

When God takes us through affliction and distress He does it to stretch us and to increase our capacity much like a weight trainer builds his strength. He builds his capacity or strength by putting his muscles under stress or pressure.

God wants to enlarge us. He wants to enlarge our heart, our vision, our faith, our ministry and our effectiveness.

7. God wants to provoke us to seek Him (Job 36:15; Hos. 5:15; Ps. 119:67).

I will return again to My place till they acknowledge their offense. Then they will seek My face; in their affliction they will earnestly seek Me. Hosea 5:15

Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word. Psalm 119:67

This is one of the ways that God uses to get our attention. Too often when things are going well it is easy for us to begin to neglect our relationship with the Lord. As soon as trouble comes, we look up and come running back into the arms of the Lord.

8. God wants to shape us into an arrow that is sharp and that will accurately hit the intended target (Is. 49:1-2).

Listen, O coastlands, to Me, and take heed, you peoples from afar! The LORD has called Me from the womb; from the matrix of My mother He has made mention of My name. And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand He has hidden Me, and made Me a polished shaft; in His quiver He has hidden Me.

Each arrow is constructed individually with a certain type of use in mind.

- a. An arrow is made from a branch that has been cut down.
- b. The branch is stripped of its bark to become a shaft.
- c. The shaft is whittled, sanded and polished to remove anything that would cause wind resistance.
- d. A sharp point or an arrow head is put on the arrow.
- e. The arrow is kept in the quiver (hidden place of darkness) until the perfect occasion for this particular arrow arises.
- f. The arrow is aimed by the master and shot out to hit the target.

Someone has once said, “Christians are like tea bags! They don’t come to full strength until they are in hot water.”

III. The key to understanding affliction is gaining a proper perspective.

“When I am getting the worst of it, God is making the most of it to see that I get the best of it.” --Dr. C.S. Lovett

God’s purpose in every trial is to do us good in the end (Deut. 8:15-16).

He led you through the vast and dreadful desert, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. He gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your fathers had never known, to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you. –NIV

“God does not permit adversity in our lives for the purpose of defeating us but for the purpose of benefiting us.” --Bill Gothard, Alumni Supplement Volume 7, 1981, pg. 17

A. Our afflictions can work for us (II Cor. 4:16-18).

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Notice the comparative phrases in this passage:

- Light affliction
- Which is but for a moment

Afflictions can test various things in our lives:

1. They can test the strength of our foundation (Mt. 7:24-27).

Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. Matthew 7:24-25

2. They can test the genuineness of our faith (I Pet. 1:6-7).

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ...

3. They can test our motivation and our work (I Cor. 3:12-15).

Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

4. They can test our friendships (Pro. 17:17).

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

5. They can produce Christian character in us (Rom. 5:3-5).

And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

- B. Our afflictions are part of the “all things” that work together for good (Rom. 8:28).

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

Sometimes when we read this we translate the word “good” to mean “comfort and ease.” What God means by good is often “growth and change.”

- C. Our afflictions are part of our complete identification with Christ (Rom. 8:17; Phil 3:10; Col. 1:24).

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. Romans 8:16-17

I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church... Colossians 1:24

- D. Our afflictions can destroy pride and produce patience and humility (Deut. 8:1-5; II Cor. 12:7-10; Jam. 1:2).

Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land that the LORD promised on oath to your forefathers. 2 Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. 3 He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that

comes from the mouth of the LORD. 4 Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years. 5 Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you. Deuteronomy 8:1-5, NIV

Humility and patience put us in a position of being able to minister to others in the same way that Jesus did.

To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

II Corinthians 12:7-10, NIV

- E. Our afflictions can position us to be more effective in our ministry to others (II Cor. 1:3-7; Heb. 4:15).

All praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the source of every mercy and the God who comforts us. 4 He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When others are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. 5 You can be sure that the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ. 6 So when we are weighed down with troubles, it is for your benefit and salvation! For when God comforts us, it is so that we, in turn, can be an encouragement to you. Then you can patiently endure the same things we suffer. 7 We are confident that as you share in suffering, you will also share God's comfort. II Corinthians 1:3-7, NLT

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Hebrews 4:15

- F. Our afflictions can lead to a display of God's glory (John 9:1-2; 11:3-4; Rom. 8:18).

Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick." When Jesus heard that, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." John 11:3-4

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Romans 8:18

- G. Our afflictions can become a testimony of the power and faithfulness of God (Ps. 34:19; II Cor. 4:7-12).

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. 8 We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are

perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed--10 always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. 11 For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 12 So then death is working in us, but life in you. II Corinthians 4:7-12

H. Our afflictions can be a teacher of God's ways (Ps. 119:71; Is. 30:20-21).

And though the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers. Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left.

Isaiah 30:20-21

It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes.

Psalms 119:71

I. Our afflictions can do for us what adverse winds do for the eagle.

Note: The following points are extracted from *Understanding the Winds of Adversity*, Institute in Basic Youth Conflicts, Supplementary Alumni Book, Volume 7, 1981.

1. Turbulent winds cause the eagle to fly higher.

There is a tremendous lifting power in the thermal updrafts of turbulent winds. These updrafts cause the eagle to reach great heights as he soars with them.

2. Turbulent winds give the eagle a larger view.

The higher the eagle flies, the larger will be his perspective of the land below him. From this higher position the sharp eyes of the eagle are able to see much more.

3. Turbulent winds lift the eagle above harassment.

At lower elevations the eagle is often harassed by suspicious crows, disgruntled hawks and other smaller birds. As the eagle soars higher, he leaves behind all these distractions.

4. Turbulent winds allow the eagle to use less effort.

The winds of the eagle are designed for gliding in the winds. The feather structure prevents stalling, reduces the turbulence and produces a relatively smooth ride with minimum effort—even in rough winds.

5. Turbulent winds allow the eagle to stay up longer.

The eagle uses winds to soar and glide for long periods of time. In the winds, the eagle first glides in long shallow circles downward and then spirals upward with a thermal updraft.

6. Turbulent winds help the eagle to fly faster.

Normally, the eagle flies at a speed of about 50 miles per hour (75 km). However, when he glides in wind currents, speeds of 80-100 miles (120-150 km) per hour are not uncommon.

IV. Not all affliction is designed by God.

- A. Some of the affliction that we experience is the fruit of our own bad sowing (Ps. 107:17, 19).

Some became fools through their rebellious ways and suffered affliction because of their iniquities...19 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress.

For this reason it is appropriate if we are in an extended season of trial that we do some self examination to be sure that we are not violating one of God's principles of prosperity (I Cor. 11:31-32).

But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.

The following are some of the things that will produce long lasting problems:

1. Repaying evil for good (Pro. 17:13).

Whoever rewards evil for good, evil will not depart from his house.

Proverbs 17:13

2. A lack of true repentance (Pro. 28:13).

He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.

3. A lack of respect for parents and other authorities (Pro. 20:20).

Whoever curses his father or his mother, his lamp will be put out in deep darkness.

4. Being greedy for gain (Pro. 15:27).

He who is greedy for gain troubles his own house, but he who hates bribes will live.

5. Robbing the needy (Pro. 22:22-23; 14:21; 17:5; 21:13; 28:27).

Do not rob the poor because he is poor, nor oppress the afflicted at the gate; for the LORD will plead their cause, and plunder the soul of those who plunder them.
Proverbs 22:22-23

6. A lack of personal discipline and receiving instruction (Pro. 5:21-23).

For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and He ponders all his paths. His own iniquities entrap the wicked man, and he is caught in the cords of his sin. He shall die for lack of instruction, and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.

7. A lack of complete commitment to Jesus Christ (Pro. 13:21; Ps. 32:10; Is. 47:10-15).

Misfortune pursues the sinner, but prosperity is the reward of the righteous.
Proverbs 13:21

8. Being careless with your lips (Pro. 21:23).

Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles.

9. Associating with fools (Pro.13:20).

He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm.
Proverbs 13:20, NIV

10. Being lazy (Pro. 6:11; 19:15; 20:4, 13; 28:19).

He who works his land will have abundant food, but the one who chases fantasies will have his fill of poverty. Proverbs 28:19

- B. The only way to escape long lasting problems is to repent, change and begin sowing for a new harvest (Rev. 3:19; Pro. 28:13).

Buy your gold from me. It has been refined in a fire, and it will make you rich. Buy white clothes from me. Wear them and you can cover up your shameful nakedness. Buy medicine for your eyes, so that you will be able to see. 19 I correct and punish everyone I love. So make up your minds to turn away from your sins. 20 Listen! I am standing and knocking at your door. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and we will eat together. 21 Everyone who wins the victory will sit with me

on my throne, just as I won the victory and sat with my Father on his throne. 22 If you have ears, listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.

Revelation 3:18-22, Msg

V. There is a proper way to respond to the dealings of God.

A. We are to endure (Mt. 10:22; II Tim. 4:5; Jam. 5:7-11).

Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. 8 You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. 9 Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! 10 My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. 11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord--that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful. James 5:7-11

But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. II Timothy 4:5

1. This means that we stay under.
2. This means that we do not run away from.
3. This means that we let patience have its perfect work.

B. We are to count it all joy (Jam. 1:2).

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials...

C. We are to remain faithful (Rev. 2:8-10).

And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, "These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: 'I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.'"

D. We are to praise God (I Th. 5:16-18).

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Lesson 24

Christianity that Walks in the Light of Eternal Judgment

Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits. Hebrews 6:1-3

One of the elementary principles of Christ that is listed in the above passage is “eternal judgment.” If the believer is to live a victorious life they have to live their life in the light of eternal judgment.

I. What happens to people when they die?

- A. At death, the body of every man, woman and child goes to the grave to await a future resurrection (Gen. 3:19; Job 5:26-27). However, the spirit and soul (the eternal part) of man do not (II Pet. 1:13-14).

In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return. Genesis 3:19

Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.

II Peter 1:13-14

The body is the tent that houses the soul and spirit or the invisible part of man.

I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. –NIV

- B. At death, the spirit and soul of the believer go to be with Christ until the believer experiences the first resurrection (Rev. 20:5-6).

But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

1. Stephen, the church’s first martyr, called upon Jesus to receive his spirit (Acts 7:59).

And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”

2. Jesus told the repentant thief that he would be with Him that very day (Luke

23:43).

And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

3. Paul indicated that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (II Cor. 5:1-8).

For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, 3 if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. 4 For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. 5 Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. 6 So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. 7 For we walk by faith, not by sight. 8 We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

- C. At death, the spirit and soul of the unbeliever go to “Hades” (New Testament word) or “Sheol” (Old Testament word), which is the place of the dead, to await the second resurrection (Rev. 20:11-15).

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. 14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

II. What is going to happen when Christ returns?

Christ has a multi-faceted purpose for His return.

- A. He is coming to receive His own (John 14:3; 17:24; I Th. 4:16-17).

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

Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the

foundation of the world. John 17:24

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

I Thessalonians 4:16-17

- B. He is coming to settle accounts with His servants (Mt. 25:19).

After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

- C. He is coming to judge all (Mt. 25:31-46; II Tim. 4:1, 8; Jude 14-15).

I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom... I Timothy 4:1

- D. He is coming to reward every man according to his works (Mt. 16:27; I Cor. 3:12-15; II Tim. 4:8; I Pet. 5:4).

Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. II Timothy 4:8

...when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. I Peter 5:4

- E. He is coming to complete the salvation of the saints (Rom. 8:23; Heb. 9:28; I Th. 3:13).

Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. Romans 8:23

And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation. Hebrews 9:27-28

And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

I Thessalonians 3:12-13

- F. He is coming to be glorified in His saints (Col. 3:4; II Th. 1:10).

When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

...when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.

II Thessalonians 1:10

- G. He is coming to receive His bride, His reward for redemption (Mt. 25:10; Eph. 5:25-27; Rev. 19:7-9).

“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’” And he said to me, “These are the true sayings of God.”

Revelation 19:7-9

III. Is there judgment after death?

YES! There is a judgment in relation to the believer, and there is a judgment in relation to the unbeliever (John 5:28-29).

Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth--those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

- A. There are three significant judgments in relation to the believer.

1. There is judgment in the past (Is. 53:1-12).

The judgment that has taken place in the past is the judgment that took place at Calvary when Christ was judged by the Father for our sins. As a result of this judgment of God in relation to His Son...

- a. We have redemption through His blood (Eph. 1:7).
- b. We have the forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7).
- c. We escape judgment for our sins (John 5:24).
- d. We have eternal life (John 10:28; Tit. 3:7; I John 2:25).

2. There is judgment in the present (I Cor. 11:31-32).

For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

This is a judgment that we make on ourselves. It is self-examination. As we respond to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives we make judgments on our own activities, motives and attitudes. In doing so we walk more and more in the light and become more and more identified with God's purpose for our lives.

3. There is judgment in the future.
- C. The future judgment of the believer follows the first resurrection and is referred to as the Judgment Seat of Christ (II Cor. 5:10-11).

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences. II Corinthians 5:10-11

1. This judgment involves believers only and does not deal with the issue of forgiven sin and the salvation of the believer (Eph. 1:7-8; Is. 43:25).

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence... Ephesians 1:7-8

I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins. Isaiah 43:25

2. This judgment concerns the believer's faithfulness to all the will of God (Luke 12:42-48).

And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? 43 Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. 44 Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. 45 But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, 46 the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. 47 And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. 48 But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more."

3. This judgment involves giving an account for all of the gifts and graces that have been entrusted to the believer (Luke 16:2).

He also said to His disciples: "There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. So he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.'" Luke 16:1-2

As believers we are steward of the mysteries of God. Stewards are not owners and ultimately must give an account for their stewardship (I Cor. 4:1-4).

- a. Stewardship involves, first of all, a giving of one's life back to God (I Cor. 6:19-20; Rom. 12:1).

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

- b. Stewardship involves a wise and honorable use of one's time (Ps. 90:10-12; Pro. 24:30-34).

Seventy years are given to us! Some may even reach eighty. But even the best of these years are filled with pain and trouble; soon they disappear, and we are gone. Who can comprehend the power of your anger? Your wrath is as awesome as the fear you deserve. Teach us to make the most of our time, so that we may grow in wisdom. Psalm 90:10-12

I went by the field of the lazy man, and by the vineyard of the man devoid of understanding; and there it was, all overgrown with thorns; its surface was covered with nettles; its stone wall was broken down. When I saw it, I considered it well; I looked on it and received instruction: a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest; so shall your poverty come like a prowler, and your need like an armed man. Proverbs 24:30-34

- c. Stewardship involves a wise investment and cultivation of individual talents and abilities (Mt. 25:14-30).
- d. Stewardship involves a proper understanding and use of one's possessions (Mt. 6:19-21; Col. 3:1-2).

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:19-21

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where

Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Colossians 3:1-4

- e. Stewardship involves a careful and purposeful use of all finances (II Cor. 9:6-8).

But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. II Corinthians 9:6-8

4. This judgment concerns the believer's works of service rendered to Christ in this life (Mt. 16:27; I Cor. 3:12-15).

For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Matthew 16:27

Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. I Corinthians 3:12-15

5. This judgment is followed by corresponding rewards for a life lived for Christ (I Tim. 4:8; Rev. 11:18).

For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

I Timothy 4:8

The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth. Revelation 11:18

6. Other related verses: Romans 14:8-12; I John 4:17; II Timothy 4:1

For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living. But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For

we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: "As I live, says the LORD, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God." So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. Romans 14:8-12

Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. I John 4:17

*Such love has no fear because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of judgment, and this shows that his love has not been perfected in us.
-NLT*

*And so I solemnly urge you before God and before Christ Jesus--who will someday judge the living and the dead when he appears to set up his Kingdom...
II Timothy 4:1*

- C. The judgment of the unbeliever follows the second resurrection and is referred to as the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15).

*Then I saw a **great white throne** and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. 14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*

1. This judgment involves those whose names are not written in the Book of Life (Rev. 20:15).
2. This judgment will settle all accounts and render the wages of sin and the reward of iniquity (Acts 1:18; II Pet. 2:12-17).

12 But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, 13 and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, 14 having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children. 15 They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; 16 but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet. 17 These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. II Peter 2:12-17

IV. What are some of the rewards that God will give to His faithful?

- A. A public commendation for work well done (Mt. 25:21, 23).

His lord said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord."

- B. An imperishable crown of victory that does not fade (I Pet. 5:4; II Tim 4:6-8; I Cor. 9:24-27).

...when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. I Peter 5:4

Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. II Timothy 4:8

- C. Future responsibility in the eternal state (Mt. 25:23; Luke 12:44; 19:12-27; I Cor. 2:9).

The crowd was listening to everything Jesus said. And because he was nearing Jerusalem, he told a story to correct the impression that the Kingdom of God would begin right away. 12 He said, "A nobleman was called away to a distant empire to be crowned king and then return. 13 Before he left, he called together ten servants and gave them ten pounds of silver to invest for him while he was gone. 14 But his people hated him and sent a delegation after him to say they did not want him to be their king. 15 When he returned, the king called in the servants to whom he had given the money. He wanted to find out what they had done with the money and what their profits were. 16 The first servant reported a tremendous gain--ten times as much as the original amount! 17 'Well done!' the king exclaimed. 'You are a trustworthy servant. You have been faithful with the little I entrusted to you, so you will be governor of ten cities as your reward.' 18 The next servant also reported a good gain--five times the original amount. 19 'Well done!' the king said. 'You can be governor over five cities.' 20 But the third servant brought back only the original amount of money and said, 'I hid it and kept it safe. 21 I was afraid because you are a hard man to deal with, taking what isn't yours and harvesting crops you didn't plant.' 22 'You wicked servant!' the king roared. 'Hard, am I? If you knew so much about me and how tough I am, 23 why didn't you deposit the money in the bank so I could at least get some interest on it?' 24 Then turning to the others standing nearby, the king ordered, 'Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one who earned the most.' 25 'But, master,' they said, 'that servant has enough already!' 26 'Yes,' the king replied, 'but to those who use well what they are given, even more will be given. But from those who are unfaithful, even what little they have will be taken away. 27

And now about these enemies of mine who didn't want me to be their king--bring them in and execute them right here in my presence.'” Luke 19:12-27, NLT

No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him. I Corinthians 2:9b

V. What makes our life on earth and the decisions that we make so important?

A. Because death is final (Heb. 9:27).

And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment...

B. Because after death there are no second chances (Luke 16:19-31; Eccl. 11:3; Ezek.18:19-32).

C. Because our eternal destiny is determined on the basis of what we do in and with this life (I Cor. 3:10-15).

D. Because heaven and hell are eternal states (Rev. 20:10; 22:5).