

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

In Thirteen Lessons
As Taught in the Pages of God's Word

By
J. C. CHOATE

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INSTRUCTIONS FOR THOSE WHO DESIRE TO USE THIS BOOK AS A BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE:

Please study the material thoroughly, along with your Bible or New Testament, and then take a separate sheet of paper and answer the questions, lesson by lesson. Be sure to put at the top of the sheet that the questions being answered are for Lesson One, Lesson Two, or whichever lesson you are covering at the time. Keep the book intact, and send only your written answers for each chapter. You may want to submit answers for four or five lessons at a time, have them graded and returned to you, and then continue on until you have completed the book. Congratulations on taking the course, and may you be greatly benefitted by it.

— The Author

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INTRODUCTION

These lessons were originally prepared with both the individual and class situation in mind. A definite effort has been made to keep the material simple and to the point. Questions have been included to emphasize the major lessons that are to be learned.

The theme for this study book is one of great importance. The Bible teaches that there is one pure gospel but in sharp contrast to that the religious world tells us that there are many gospels. Because of this it is even more important that we study the gospel as set forth in God's word so that we may not only know the truth but that we may be on guard against error.

The gospel message of these lessons, drawn from God's word, represents good news and glad tidings. It is such because it proclaims that Christ died, was buried, and was resurrected, enabling men to obey the commands of the gospel, so that there can be salvation from sin and the hope of eternal life. In a time in which there is so much bad news, so much error, and so much destruction, it is refreshing to know that this salvation is still available in our day.

Please study these lessons with the desire to know God's will. To be sure that what is written is true, compare every statement with the New Testament itself. After careful examination, if you find that it is the truth, we would encourage you to believe it and to obey it. Then, truly you will have good news to pass on to your friends.

J.C. Choate
Church of Christ
Winona, Mississippi
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LESSON ONE

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

We read of the gospel of Christ numerous times in the New Testament. We hear others talking about it. We often refer to the gospel ourselves in various ways. But what is the gospel? What is the gospel of Christ? Let us turn to the scriptures for the answer. Paul writes, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Romans 10: 11-15). Basically, then, the word gospel means good news, glad tidings salvation, truth, word, promise, and hope. It is distinguished and different from all other news in that it pertains to the good news of Christ.

This good news is based on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul wrote the Corinthians, "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried and that he arose again the third day according to the

scriptures.” (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). But how could this be good news? Because it is through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ that one is saved and has the hope of eternal life. The same writer again says, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:16, 17).

We all know what good news means to us in our daily life. When some blessing comes our way, we are so happy and we want to share the story with everyone. This is only natural. The same thing should be true with the good news of salvation that comes through Christ. If we have obeyed the Lord, and have been saved by his grace, then we should want to tell the world about it. This is why Christ said, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mark 16:15, 16).

The scriptures also speak of the gospel of God. We read, “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ: To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace

from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 1:1-7). In the same sense, the same writer speaks of the gospel of the grace of God: “But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.” (Acts 20:24). These passages only show the unity that exists between God and Christ. It was God who sent Christ to give the gospel to the world. In this way it may either be referred to as the gospel of God or the gospel of Christ.

Again, we read of the glorious gospel. Listen: “According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.” (1 Timothy 1:11). Again, “But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.” (2 Corinthians 4:3, 4). The gospel is said to be glorious, which means heavenly, eternal, etc., because it is from God and Christ.

In Matthew, Mark, Luke and John the expression “the gospel of the kingdom” is used several times. “And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.” (Mark 8:35). “Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the people of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.” (Mark 1:14, 15). During this period of time, Christ and others,

preached the good news of the forthcoming kingdom. In other words, it had not yet been established, but soon would be. Later on the gospel was preached in fact, based on the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection in Christ, and those who obeyed the commands of it were saved and added to the Lord's church or kingdom. (Acts 2).

Then we read of the gospel of salvation. Speaking to the Ephesian Christians, the Apostles says, "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." (Ephesians 1: 13). It is the gospel then that brings salvation. Sometimes we speak of the gospel plan of salvation, which is but a means to describe the Lord's plan or way of saving man.

Next, we have the gospel of peace. Going back to Romans 10: 15, the writer says, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace." "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." (Ephesians 6: 14, 16). The gospel brings peace—peace of mind, peace of soul, peace with our fellowman, Christ was a man of peace and his gospel brings the kind of peace that he experienced—peace with God. Surely that is good news.

Finally, we are told of the gospel of hope. "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled. In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unprovable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith

grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; where of I Paul am made a minister.” (Colossians 1:21-23). As a result of obeying the gospel, then one has hope of life and life eternal. This is what the writer is talking about here. Hope comes no other way.

From time to time Paul speaks of “my gospel” or “our gospel.” What does he mean by this? He is simply referring to the gospel that he and others had received and that gospel which the Lord had given them to preach to others. In this respect, he says, “For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.” (1 Thessalonians 1:5). Also, as pointed out here, and in Romans 1:16, the gospel is powerful in that it saves those who believe and obey it.

Then this is the gospel in the words of the scriptures. It is simple, yet powerful. It is as modern as today and as ageless as Christ. It saves, it gives hope. There is but one and it is to be preached to all. It is of Christ, God, and is glorious. It blesses, it challenges, and it brings responsibilities. It is for one and it is for all. This is truly good news.

QUESTIONS

1. Read Romans 10: 11-15.
2. Explain the gospel.
3. Upon what is the gospel based?
4. How can the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ be good news?
5. Quote Romans 1: 16, 17.
6. How do we react to good news in secular affairs?
7. What did Christ teach in Mark 16: 15, 16?
8. In what sense can we speak of the gospel as belonging to God?
9. Explain how the gospel is glorious.
10. Discuss the "gospel of the kingdom."
11. Give some scripture references to support this.
12. When was the gospel preached for the first time in fact?
13. What brings salvation? How?
14. In what way does the gospel bring peace?
15. Wherein does our hope lie?
16. Why did Paul speak of "my gospel" or "our gospel?"
17. How much power does it have?
18. How many gospels are there?

LESSON TWO

THE FACTS OF THE GOSPEL

The scriptures clearly teach that Jesus Christ died, was buried, and then was resurrected from the grave. These incidents in the story of Jesus are referred to as the facts of the gospel. Paul mentions each one of them in writing to his Corinthian brethren, showing the relationship of their salvation to these facts: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand: By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." (1 Corinthians 15: 1-4). In other words, the gospel of Christ rests upon these truths. Had Christ not died, been buried, and resurrected from the grave, then there would have been no gospel, and therefore no salvation. But inasmuch as he died, was buried, and resurrected, then we do have a foundation for the gospel, and therefore it has changed the world.

Just now we want to consider the facts of the gospel, one by one, to see what they hold for you and me:

1. The death of Christ.

The Bible says again and again that Christ died. But listen to the word of God itself: "Let this mind be in you,

which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:5-8). "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (Hebrews 2:9).

For whom did Christ die? He died for every man as we have just noted in Hebrews 2:9. The scriptures also tells us that he died for sinners. Listen: "But God commandeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8). But why did he die for sinners? To provide salvation and hope. We read, "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2:4). "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise: but it long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9).

That means then that someone died for you and me. Just think about it. Although we were sinners, and enemies of God, and not deserving of such grace and mercy, nevertheless, Christ was willing to leave heaven to come to this land of sin and sorrow and to die upon the cross that we might be saved and have the hope of eternal life. (Romans 5:6,7). How wonderful! But just think, he likewise died for all of the world—yesterday, today, and tomorrow. How thankful we should be, and it should result in our obedience and faithfulness to him. How could we dare do any less?

2. The burial of Christ.

After Christ died on the cross, the record says, "When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rocks; and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre." (Matthew 27: 57-61).

Now in many ways there is nothing different or unusual about the Lord's burial, especially for that time. Men die every day and are buried. This is true around the world and has been true since the creation. But the Lord promised that if he died and was buried that he would rise again. He declared, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (John 2: 19). Of course they did not understand him then, but would they have believed him if they had understood? What happened after his death and his burial? The disciples seemed to have entered into a state of shock, feeling that all was lost. Then what happened? Jesus came forth as he promised that he would.

3. The resurrection of Christ.

Had Christ died on the cross and then remained in the grave, the world would have forgotten him unless it might be for remembering him as an imposter. Had he died and remained in the tomb then it could be said that he was no more than any other man. But Jesus was different. He was the Son of God. He said that he would rise from the grave, and he did. (Matthew 28). As a result of his resurrection

then there is salvation, assurance that all will be resurrected, and the hope of eternal life.

But before going further, let us notice some verses of scripture that speak of the Lord's resurrection. Listen: "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." (Romans 1:4). "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." (Philippians 3:10). "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to the abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." (1 Peter 1:3). "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 3:21). "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him." (Romans 6:9). "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living." (Romans 14:9).

Inasmuch as Christ died, was buried, and was resurrected from the grave, he is now our Lord and our Saviour. He reigns at the right hand of God (Acts 2), and has promised to come again one day. (John 14:1-3).

With the death of Christ, his blood was shed that men might have the remission of sins. (Matthew 26:28; Ephesians 1:7). It is through one's obedience to the gospel of Christ that one comes into contact with that blood and thus his sins are remitted or blotted out. (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16). In the lessons that follow we will see more clearly how this is done.

Be assured, one and all, that as a result of the Lord's resurrection that he lives today. As his obedient followers, we likewise live and will reign and live with him forevermore, even throughout all eternity.

QUESTIONS

1. What does the Bible clearly teach about Jesus?
2. List the facts of the gospel.
3. Why are they referred to as such?
4. Read 1 Corinthians 15: 1-4.
5. Explain the meaning of the gospel of Christ.
6. Give some verses of scripture that teach that Jesus died.
7. For whom did Christ die?
8. Why did Christ die for sinners?
9. Discuss what the death of Christ should mean to each one of us.
10. Tell the story of the Lord's burial.
11. What did Christ promise he would do if he died and was buried?
12. Did the disciples understand his promise?
13. In what way was the Lord's death and burial different from all others?
14. What was the result of the resurrection of Christ?
15. Mention some verses of scripture that speak of his resurrection.
16. What does Christ mean to us now?
17. Where is he at this time?
18. Will he come again? If so, when?
19. Discuss briefly the significance of the blood of Christ.

LESSON THREE

THE GOSPEL CALL

In the religious world today there are many different ideas as to how God calls an individual to salvation. We will mention some of the major ones. First, there are those who teach that God speaks to them directly through a wee small voice. Second, others say that Christ comes to them in a dream or in a vision. And third, there are those who believe that the Lord calls them through some special experience. Now in all three of these, it is claimed that this is the Lord's way of saving them or that of imparting some special message to them. But does the Bible teach this? Here is a warning. Be suspicious of those who are always hearing and seeing things.

The first thing we want to find out is this: Does God speak today? If so, how does he speak? This is easy when we turn to Hebrews 1: 1, 2: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." So according to this God speaks today and he speaks through his Son. This is also pointed out in Matthew 17: 5 at the transfiguration of Christ. Listen to God: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

The next question is: Does God speak directly to man today or does Christ speak directly? This is cleared up when we read these verses: "And many other signs truly

did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” (John 20: 30, 31). Now why are things written? That we might believe. But where are these things written? In the New Testament. Therefore if we will but read and study its contents then we may know the Lord’s will.

Again, we read. “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Romans 10: 17). Question: Does faith come any other way? If it does, the scriptures do not say so. It is true that there are those who talk about hearing this, seeing that, having an experience, etc., but God’s word does not teach any such. Rather, it teaches that faith comes by hearing the word of God. Therefore, there is but one Bible and there is but one faith. (Ephesians 4: 5).

Because faith comes by hearing the word of God, that is why we are taught the importance of studying the word (2 Timothy 2: 15), searching the scriptures (John 5: 39), etc. As a matter of fact, that is why there is so much emphasis on the scriptures themselves, indicating their inspiration and all-sufficiency. (2 Timothy 3: 16, 17).

Then the scriptures tell us that the gospel has been placed in earthen vessels. Listen to the Apostle Paul: “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” (2 Corinthians 4: 5-7).

Now what is he saying here? He is simply saying that the Lord had chosen human beings, individuals like Paul, to take the gospel to their fellow men. Think now about the various cases of conversion in the book of Acts. Give one example of where the Lord ever told one individual what to do to be saved. You can't. For instance, in Acts 8, the angel of the Lord sent Philip to preach Christ to the eunuch. Question: Why didn't the angel go and leave Philip in Samaria to continue to preach to the people there? Simply because the Lord had put the gospel in earthen vessels and therefore it was up to man to deliver the gospel message. Again, in Acts 9 we have Saul asking the Lord what to do to be saved and the Lord told him to go into the city and there it would be told him what he should do. Later on Ananias came and told him. (Acts 22: 16). Question: Why didn't the Lord tell him? Because it was not his will to do so. And so with all of the other cases of conversion in the book of Acts. That is the reason we know that the Lord is not speaking directly to people today apart from the scriptures or appearing to them to tell them what to do to be saved. Even if the Lord were here he would not be able to tell a person what to do (Acts 9), and should he do so it could not be different from the gospel already proclaimed (Galatians 1: 6-9), so there would be no purpose in his coming to do that which he has already commanded man to do. (Mark 16: 15, 16). In other words, the Lord will not do for man what he can do for himself.

Because the gospel has been placed in earthen vessels, then this is the reason so much emphasis is placed upon the importance of the preacher taking the gospel to others. Christ said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized

shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mark 16: 15, 16). Again, we read, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (Romans 10: 13-15). Then, finally, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.” (2 Timothy 4: 2). You can see then that Lord has chosen to reveal his will through this medium. It is all very simple.

That being true, then Paul wrote his Thessalonian brethren: “Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Thessalonians 2: 14). What is it Paul? Paul says that the Lord called the Thessalonians by the gospel. That is, Paul preached the gospel to them, they heard it and obeyed it, and therefore they were called to Christ in this manner. Another way of putting it, Christ called them to salvation through the preaching of the gospel.

Now what about today? How are we called? We who are Christians have likewise been called by the same gospel. That is, the gospel was preached to us, we heard it, believed it, obeyed it, and the Lord saved us. As we take the gospel to others, the same thing happens again and again. The Lord is not calling one person one way and another person another way. Rather, he is calling one and all by and through the one gospel.

Yes, God speaks today but he speaks through Christ. Christ speaks but he speaks through the word. Those who obey Christ have the responsibility of preaching and teaching the gospel to others. By this means the Lord works through the gospel preacher or teacher to reveal his will and to invite the lost to come unto him. (Matthew 11:28-30).

Our first duty is to preach the gospel and our second duty is to assist those who want to obey the Lord. (Matthew 28:19,20). This is why Paul made this statement: "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." (1 Corinthians 1:17,18). So he is saying that he was not sent just to baptized people. His first duty was to preach the gospel and naturally he was ready to baptize those who wanted to obey the Lord.

Have you heard the gospel before? If not, then you are now receiving the gospel call—the call to come unto Christ. Obey him and he will save you.

QUESTIONS

1. List some of the different ideas as to how God calls an individual to salvation.
2. Does the Lord speak to man today?
3. How does he speak?
4. Read Hebrews 1: 1, 2.
5. Through whom does God speak?
6. Quote Matthew 17: 5.
7. Does God speak directly to man today?
8. What does John 20: 30, 31 teach?
9. How does faith come?
10. Does faith come any other way?
11. How many faiths are there?
12. In what has the gospel been placed?
13. Define earthen vessels?
14. Give some cases in the book of Acts of where the Lord worked through a gospel preacher to reveal his will to man.
15. Why didn't the Lord speak to these individuals, directly and tell them what to do to be saved?
16. Quote Mark 16: 15, 16.
17. How are we called to the Lord today?
18. Explain how we are called by the gospel.
19. What is our duty as Christians?
20. Tell what Paul was sent to do.

LESSON FOUR

OBEDIENCE TO THE GOSPEL

Can one obey the gospel? There are those who say that this is impossible. But the Bible teaches to the contrary. There are the facts of the gospel, which have already been observed, and we must believe them. Then there are commands of the gospel, which will be considered in following lessons, and we must obey them.

To begin with, let us re-emphasize the facts of the gospel. Paul listed them in 1 Corinthians 15: 1-4 as being the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. But what does this have to do with obedience? A great deal, as we are going to see. Now listen to the Apostle as he writes to the Christians in Rome: "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." (Romans 6: 17, 18). Please notice that they were the servants of sin and then they became the servants of righteousness. What brought about the change? Simply this: They "obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered" to them. In other words, they obeyed the gospel of Christ. But how could they obey facts? They couldn't, and didn't. The doctrine here refers to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. But notice again: They had obeyed a form of that doctrine. In so doing they had died to their sins, had been buried with their Lord in the waters of baptism, and had been resurrected from the watery

grave. This is all brought out in the first part of Romans 6. Let us read: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." (Romans 6: 1-6). So that is the form of doctrine that they had obeyed as pointed out by Paul later in Romans 6: 17, 18. Not only so, but every time one obeys the gospel of Christ then he obeys this form of doctrine, or pictures the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection in his actions.

As we continue, we want to see what the commands of the gospel are and how they relate to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The Lord himself commanded the Apostles, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16: 15, 16). Matthew's version is recorded thus: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28: 19, 20). Now you will observe here that the Lord is giving the command that the gospel should be preached. Not only so, but he carries

through to show that certain commands must be obeyed for the individual to be saved. Then in carrying out the Lord's instructions the Apostles are found preaching the gospel in the city of Jerusalem. (Acts 2). First of all, they produce proofs and evidences to prove that Jesus was truly the Son of God. After the people were convinced of this, the record says they asked this question: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Then to show that there was something for them to do, Peter replied, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:38). Also, when the Lord appeared to Saul in Acts 9 he wanted to know what he should do to be saved. The Lord told him to go into the city and it would be told him. Later Ananias came and did just that. (Acts 22:16). In Acts 8 we have Philip preaching Christ to the Eunuch and the record says that the Eunuch wanted to be baptized. But listen to the conversation that followed: "And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing." (Acts 8:37-39). Now what are the commands of the gospel? First, it is necessary for one to hear the gospel preached. Second, one must believe in God, and Christ, as the Son of God. Third, he must repent of all of his sins? Fourth, he must confess with his mouth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And fifth, there comes baptism, a burial in water, which is for the remission of sins.

Continuing with these thoughts, in obeying the commands of the gospel, then one dies to his sins. That is, he has heard the gospel and has come to believe the Lord to the extent that he is willing to repent of all of his sins or to turn away from them. Thus, this represents death to sin. Then following death there is a burial. This is a burial in water. We have already observed Philip and the Eunuch going down into the water that the burial might be performed. Also Colossians 2: 12 and Romans 6: 4 tell us that baptism is a burial in water. And then after the burial comes the resurrection. Acts 8 says that Philip and the Eunuch came up out of the water. Romans 6 also talks about a burial and a resurrection and then a planting and being raised to walk in newness of life. Thus, in one's obedience to these simple commands, we have the individual symbolizing the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection. Not only so, but every individual that obeys Christ so pictures that death, burial, and resurrection.

In John 3:3-5 Christ speaks of being born of water and of the Spirit. This is just another way of saying the same thing, for when one is buried in water, then there is the coming forth or a birth from water, which is a resurrection from the watery grave. As such, one goes forth to walk in newness of life, since he is now a new creature in Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Commands are to be obeyed, and those who obey the commands of the Lord are rewarded accordingly. But please be reminded of the fact that not one of the commands of the gospel can be by-passed as being unnecessary or unimportant. Then only after compliance with each command, does the Lord save one, add him to the church, give him all spiritual blessings, with the hope of eternal life.

Although the gospel is for all, and must be obeyed by all accountable beings for salvation to be had, yet Paul laments, "But they have not all obeyed the gospel." (Romans 10:16). This within itself would imply again that one cannot only obey the gospel, but must obey it to be saved. But what about those who do not? He says, in this case, "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). So according to this then ignorance of God, on the one hand, and failure to obey the gospel on the other, will bring the same results: the vengeance of the Lord. Christ said that those who obey the gospel will be saved but those who believe not will be condemned. (Mark 16:16). All of this is to say that there will be no escape for those who neglect their salvation." (Hebrews 2:2,3).

QUESTIONS

1. Can one obey the gospel?
2. List the facts of the gospel.
3. Read Romans 6: 17, 18.
4. What did the Romans obey?
5. Explain what the form of the doctrine was.
6. How did they picture the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection in their obedience?
7. What does Romans 6: 1-6 teach?
8. Quote Mark 16: 15, 16 and Matthew 28: 19, 20.
9. Why did the Lord command that the gospel be preached?
10. Mention the commands within these texts that must be obeyed if salvation is to follow.
11. Tell what the Apostles preached in Acts 2.
12. Give the significance of Acts 2: 38.
13. What did Philip preach to the Eunuch?
14. List the commands of the gospel.
15. How does obedience to the commands of the gospel relate to the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection?
16. In what way does John 3: 3-5 fit in with all of this?
17. When does the Lord save one?
18. Who is to obey the gospel?
19. What will happen to those who do not obey it?
20. Will God excuse one because of ignorance?

LESSON FIVE

HEARING THE GOSPEL

What one hears can determine what one believes. If he hears error then it is possible that he will believe error, especially if he does not search the scriptures and put forth an effort to learn the truth. If he hears the truth, then he is most likely to believe the truth. This is why it is so important to hear the pure word of God. Paul says, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17). Please notice that the emphasis is upon hearing, but not just hearing anything, rather hearing the word of God, that genuine true faith might be the result.

The question arises as to how one may be sure that his faith is founded upon the word of God. It is pointed out that so many things are taught in the name of God and so many things are said to come from the pages of the Bible. Many of these are contradictory. Therefore there is division and confusion. So how may one know for sure as to whether he has heard the truth or not? The best way is to go to the Bible itself. No person should ever accept any man's preaching or teaching as final, no matter how much love and respect he has for him. Our souls are too precious and eternity is too long for us to base our faith and our salvation on the words of mere human beings. Rather, we should go to the source of the truth and that is the Bible itself. Once we turn to it then we should read and study it and search the scriptures to be sure that we are on the right path. If we are not, then we can correct it.

Christ said, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." (John 5: 39). Then we read of the people of Berea, after hearing Paul preach: "These were more noble then those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." (Acts 17: 11). Now just think about it! Here were people studying the word of God even after Paul had preached to them to see if he was preaching the truth. If the people in Paul's day could search the scriptures after his preaching, then how much the more should we do the same today after hearing modern day preachers. Wouldn't it be wonderful if everyone did this? If this were the case then there would hardly be any religious error and there would be fewer false teachers for sure.

Paul even exhorted a young preacher by the name of Timothy to study God's word. Hear him: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2: 15). Why is it that so many people are ignorant of God's word? Because they have not studied the scriptures. Why is it that so many people are deceived in religion? Again, it is because they have not studied to know the difference between truth and error. Why is it that so many people are confused about the law of Moses and the law of Christ? It is the same problem—they have not studied and therefore have not rightly divided the word of truth. My friends, if the Apostle Paul was exhorting a preacher of the gospel to study God's word, don't you think there is a need for you and me to do the same?

John exhorted the Christians of his day, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God:

because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” (1 John 4: 1). Here the Apostle is pleading with God’s people not to believe every spirit or every preacher for the simple reason that many false prophets or preachers have gone out into the world. But how may we know whether one is true or false? He suggests that we try them. How can we do that? By comparing their preaching and teaching with the word of God itself. If we would but do this then we could easily tell who is preaching the truth and who is not.

When Philip joined the eunuch in his chariot he found him reading from the scriptures and the record says, “Then Philip opened his mouth and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.” (Acts 8: 35). As a result, genuine faith was produced in his heart and he was obedient to the Lord. In Acts 8: 5 we have Philip going down to Samaria and he preached Christ unto the people. Later when Peter and John visited, the record says that they preached the word of the Lord and then returned to Jerusalem. (Acts 8: 25). Please observe that the emphasis of their preaching was upon Christ and the word of God.

There are two ways that we may hear the gospel. First of all, as has already been indicated, we can study the word of God for ourselves. In so doing, we have the opportunity of hearing Christ, Paul, Peter, and the other men of God, through the inspired pages of God’s word. But even in these modern times, not all people can read and this means that they must depend on hearing the word of God taught by word of mouth. In this case there are two parties involved: the preacher and the hearer. For this reason there is a great responsibility placed on the individual who chooses to preach God’s word. He must

be true to the book. If he handles God's word carelessly or deceitfully and misleads some one then he will have to suffer the consequences. Paul warns his Roman brethren to mark them that cause divisions and with good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. (Romans 16: 17, 18). Then the hearer has the responsibility of making certain that what he hears is the truth before he accepts it. In the case of those who are able to read God's word then they may simply search the scriptures for themselves. But in the case of those who are unable to read then the problem becomes more serious. What can they do? To be sure that they are getting the truth, they can always have someone to read to them directly from God's word itself. Certainly there is a way to learn the truth if one really wants to know it.

It is so important that one and all hear the gospel that the Lord commanded the Apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. (Mark 16: 15). Again, the record says that they should go and teach all nations. (Matthew 28: 19). But why? That mankind might hear the gospel, the truth, the word of God, believe it, obey it, and therefore be saved, Paul wrote Timothy, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." (1 Timothy 4: 16). How could one be saved by hearing? As already stressed, faith comes by hearing, and hearing leads to faith and obedience, and obedience brings salvation. That is exactly what Paul is talking about.

If you will read all of the cases of conversion in the book of Acts you will observe that there was a gospel

preacher on hand every time. What was his job? That of preaching the gospel, to those who needed to be saved. Therefore, when they heard the gospel, believed it, obeyed it, then they were saved. But what if they had not had the opportunity to hear the word of God? Then they could not have been saved because faith comes only by hearing the word of God, and without faith one cannot please God. (Hebrews 11: 6).

God said concerning his Son Jesus at the transfiguration, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." (Matthew 17: 5). Again, we read how that God speaks today through his Son, Jesus. (Hebrews 1: 1, 2). Finally, we read that Christ is the word. (John 1: 1, 2). It is important therefore that we hear Christ and that we obey him who comes to save us. Forget about what man has said. His opinions, ideas, teachings, etc., are worthless in comparison to what our Lord has said. It is Christ that we are to hear. It is Christ that we are to believe. It is Christ that we are to obey.

Finally, James wrote: "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." (James 1: 22). While it is so important that we hear the pure word of God, it is also possible to stop here and be lost. The truth cannot save us unless we obey it. That is why we are exhorted to be doers of the word and not to be hearers only. We would do well to remember this.

QUESTIONS

1. What usually determines what one believes?
2. How does faith come?
3. Can one be sure that his faith is founded upon God's word? How?
4. Should one ever accept the teaching of man as final?
5. Read John 5:39.
6. Why were the Bereans more noble than those of Thessalonica?
7. How could religious error be wiped out?
8. Why is it so necessary to study?
9. Give some results of man's ignorance of God's word.
10. What does 1 John 4:1 teach?
11. Explain what Philip preached to the Eunuch.
12. Why did Philip go down to Samaria?
13. In what two ways may one hear the gospel?
14. Does the Lord place any responsibility upon the preacher in what he preaches.
15. Who are we to hear?
16. How does Christ speak to us today?
17. What kind of hearers should we be?
18. When does the truth save?

LESSON SIX

FAITH IN GOD

The Hebrew writer tells us, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1). Faith also may be said to be confidence, trust, acceptance, and that which produces obedience. It is upon this foundation that one becomes a Christian and it is because of faith that one remains a Christian.

Again, the Hebrew writer says, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Hebrews 11:6). Please notice that there are two things involved here in believing in God. First, one must believe that he exists. Second, he must believe that God rewards those who seek after him. How could one's faith be acceptable if it fell short of this?

How can we help but believe that there is a God in heaven when we look around us and see all of the things that exist. There are the heavens, earth, animals, human life, and all of these things point to a Creator. David proclaimed: "The heavens declare the glory of God: and the firmament sheweth his handy work." (Psalms 19:1). Only a fool would deny that God exists. (Psalms 14:1).

But it is not enough to believe that there is a God. We must also believe that Jesus Christ is his Son. Christ himself said, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." (John 14:1). There are many other verses that teach the same. Listen: "For God so

loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3: 16). "Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me." (John 12: 44).

What about those who do not believe in Christ? The scriptures likewise tell us about these individuals. Christ said, "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3: 18). "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John 3: 36). "I said therefore unto you; that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." (John 8: 24).

From the foregoing verses of scripture, surely we can see the blessings that come from believing in the Lord, but at the same time we can see the curses, woes, and punishments that will befall those who choose not to believe in him.

But to what extent are we to believe in God and Christ as the Son of God? We may mentally accept them, but is this sufficient? God's word tells us that we are to show our faith or to prove it. Christ, for example, said: "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6: 46). Again, he said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not Prophesied in thy name? and in thy name

have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matthew 7: 21-23). Now these people were believers, and further-more they were engaging in religious practices, but what was wrong? They were not doing the will of the Father in heaven.

We must believe in the Lord to the extent that we will do what he says that we should do. This is why faith only cannot save because it is a dead faith. James wrote, "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." (James 2: 17). He continues, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." (James 2: 24). And finally, "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." (James 2: 26). Now in these various verses, the inspired writer is showing us that it is going to take more than faith only to save. He supports this by more than one illustration.

Sometimes preachers and teachers of faith only refer to John 3: 16 as an example of their position. However, Christ says nothing there about faith only. Rather, he shows that if we believe in God that we will not be lost but will receive eternal life. But the question is: What will an individual do if he really believes in God and his word? He will obey the Lord, of course, and that is the whole point.

Yes, justification is by faith (Romans 5: 1), but not by faith only. We are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2: 8, 9), but not by faith only. Surely one would not argue that one can be saved apart from repentance, baptism, the Christian life etc., and yet to preach faith only one would be forced into that position. Actually, the whole

problem lies in the meaning of faith, and the kind of faith that the Bible talks about is an active faith, a moving faith, a working faith, and an obedient faith. We read where Jesus saw the faith of those who brought a sick man to him. (Matthew 9: 2). He wants to see our faith rather than just to hear us talk about it. He wants us to demonstrate it or prove it through our actions and by our obedience to his commands. Otherwise, our faith is dead and vain.

Faith is one of the commands of the gospel of Christ. It comes by hearing the word of God. (Romans 10: 17). It leads the individual to repent of his sins, to confess that Christ is the Son of God, and to be baptized for the remission of sins, and we will be noticing each of these in following lessons. But without this faith there could be no obedience to these commands. With genuine faith, then obedience will automatically follow. It will not question the Lord's commands, but it will comply. It will not reject his teaching but it will obey.

Christ said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16: 16). It is only natural that if one does not believe that he will not obey the Lord. At the same time, if he does believe then he will obey Christ and that means then that he will be baptized. That is so simple, isn't it? Then in all of the cases of conversion in the book of Acts you have a preacher on hand to preach to the sinner. So he hears, believes the gospel, repents of his sins, confesses Christ, and is baptized for the remission of sins. What happens? Once the individual hears the gospel and comes to the point of believing it, then there is no problem with the rest because he is now ready to obey the Lord's com-

mands. The whole thing hinges on whether he believes or not.

We read in Acts 2 of a group of unbelievers. Some of them had had actual part in the crucifixion. Then Peter and the Apostles preached the gospel to them. They showed how that Christ was truly the Son of God. Then after convincing them of this the question was simply: "What shall we do?" (Acts 2: 37). In other words, they were now ready to act on their faith, and about three thousand did. (Acts 2: 41). The record says that Philip preached the gospel to the Samaritans and many believed and were baptized. (Acts 8: 12). When Philip preached Christ to the Eunuch, the record says that he believed and upon being told what to do he complied and went on his way rejoicing. (Acts 8: 26-39). In Acts 16 we have the story of Paul and Silas telling the Jailor that he must believe to be saved. But he was an unbeliever. So they preached the word of God to him and his household in order that they might believe, and then the record tells us that as a result the Jailor took them and washed their stripes, showing repentance, and was baptized he and all his, straightway. (Acts 16: 30-33). The same is likewise true with all of the other cases of conversion.

Finally, the scriptures teach that there is but one faith. (Ephesians 4: 5). There is but one Bible, and when all accept it and believe it, then we will all have the same faith, and that one faith will lead us all to do the same thing — to obey the Lord and to be faithful to him.

QUESTIONS

1. What is faith?
2. Is faith necessary? To what extent?
3. Read Hebrews 11: 6 and explain it.
4. Why should one believe in God?
5. Is it enough to believe that there is a God?
6. Give some verses that teach that we should believe in Jesus Christ.
7. What do the scriptures say about those who do not believe in Christ?
8. To what extent must one believe in Christ?
9. Is it enough to mentally accept Christ as the Son of God? If not, why not?
10. List some verses that emphasize obedience to Christ.
11. Will all religious people be saved?
12. What is faith only?
13. Read James 2 and briefly discuss it.
14. Does John 3: 16 teach faith only?
15. What will an individual do if he really believes in Christ?
16. Are we justified by faith?
17. What kind of faith does the Bible teach?
18. How can we prove our faith?
19. Tell how faith comes?
20. What does it lead an individual to do?
21. Will faith question the Lord's commands?
22. Quote Mark 16: 16. Explain it.
23. What do you have pointed out in all of the cases of conversion?
24. What did the people do after they believed?
25. How many faiths are there?
26. What will our faith lead us to do?

LESSON SEVEN

REPENTANCE OF SINS

Another command of the gospel is repentance. But what is repentance and what significance does it have to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ? To begin with, the word repentance means to turn again, to go in another direction, to change, to quit doing those things that are bad and wrong. Jesus told a story on one occasion that illustrates what we are talking about. He said, "But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and he said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him." (Matthew 21:28-32). As to its relationship to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, when one turns away from his sins then it is symbolic of the Lord's death. Thus, in both instances, we can see why repentance is so important.

Knowing that man is a sinner (Romans 3: 23), and that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6: 23), then Christ taught that one must repent or perish. (Luke 13: 3). To put

emphasis on this, he repeated the same statement in Luke 13: 5. In other words, he was saying that unless one repents, or turns away from that which will destroy him, then he will be lost. Again, he said, "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance." (Luke 15: 7).

Let it be understood though that repentance is more than just feeling sorry for one's sins. An individual may be sorry that he got caught and ended up in jail. He may not be sorry for what he did, but only for having to pay the consequences for his deed. This is not repentance. The Apostle Paul tells us, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." (2 Corinthians 7: 10). Godly sorrow may lead to repentance but is not to be mistaken for repentance.

Who is to repent? When Paul preached on Mars Hill, toward the close of his sermon, he said, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent." (Acts 17: 30). So according to this then the Lord wants all people everywhere to repent or turn from their sins. Also, note the fact that at one time God might have overlooked certain things because of ignorance, but he makes it plain that God will no longer tolerate or overlook any sin regardless of whether it was done in ignorance or not. Again, the Apostle Peter says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3: 9).

In speaking of all coming to repentance, naturally the scriptures identify these individuals as being men or those who have sinned. This would not include babies or even children because of such is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18: 1-3). Rather, the gospel is directed toward those who are old enough to repent of their sins and that would mean that they are knowledgeable of their bad deeds and want to turn from them. Only those who have reached the age of accountability could do this.

Now on turning to Acts 2 we have Peter and the Apostles preaching to the people on the day of Pentecost. They were preaching to sinners, to those who had even had a part in the crucifixion of Christ. It was only natural therefore when they wanted to know what they should do, for Peter to say unto them, "Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2: 38). Later on in another sermon, he said, "Repent ye therefore. and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out. When the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." (Acts 3:19).

From these verses of scripture, it is quite evident then that repentance is one of the commands of the gospel. That means then that one and all must turn away from their sins if they expect to obey the Lord and have the remission of their sins. Or another way of putting it, one just cannot be saved and go to heaven without repentance. A good moral life is not enough. There is nothing that will take the place of doing what the Lord has said that one must do in order to receive salvation.

Turning on through the book of Acts, and considering the other cases of conversion, you will find that if repentance is not commanded then it is implied. For instance, in Acts 16 after Paul and Silas had preached the word of the Lord to the Jailor and his household it says that he took them and washed their stripes. If that is not repentance, then what is it? In the case of Saul, according to Acts 9, he was a persecutor of Christians, but once the Lord appeared to him then he became a different person. He not only went on to obey the gospel, but then to preach Christ and him crucified, the one that he so bitterly opposed to begin with. Is this not repentance?

Someone has said that in obeying the gospel there is a change of heart, which is brought about by faith, a change of life, which involves repentance, and a change of state, which is the result of baptism. In repentance and obedience to Christ then all of one's sins are forgiven or washed away. One becomes a new creature (2 Corinthians 5: 17), a new person in Christ. (Galatians 3: 26, 27). Those things that he once did, he does no more. Those things that he once opposed, he is now for. There is absolutely nothing like it in all of this world.

After one becomes a Christian it may be that there will be times in which he must repent again. A Christian is not perfect. Even a faithful Christian may make mistakes. Those who purposely sin must confess their faults and pray to God for forgiveness. (James 5: 16; Acts 8: 22). Otherwise, they will be lost.

But to those who have not become Christians, and who are not yet members of the church, then they need to hear Christ, believe in him, repent of their sins, confess Christ

as the Son of God, and be baptized for the remission of sins. Every one of these commands is important. One cannot be saved by any one of them without the others. Neither can one be saved by leaving one of them off. As for repentance, it means that one must give up every sin, and all errors, even religious errors, that may be in his life, in order to enable him to continue with his obedience. Only then can one say that he has obeyed the command of repentance.

QUESTIONS

1. Define repentance.
2. What significance does it have to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ?
3. How is man classified?
4. Quote Luke 13: 3.
5. What will happen to one if he fails to repent?
6. Who rejoices when repentance takes place?
7. Can repentance be defined as just feeling sorry for one's mistakes?
8. Describe what godly sorrow does.
9. Who is to repent?
10. Read 2 Peter 3: 9 and explain it.
11. Are babies subject to repentance?
12. Who is the gospel directed to?
13. Discuss repentance as preached in Acts 2: 38 and Acts 3: 19.
14. Is repentance listed as one of the commands of the gospel?
15. Can one go to heaven on a good moral life only?
16. Show how repentance is taught in Acts 16 and also in Acts 9.
17. How does repentance bring about a change of life?
18. Will there be any need for repentance after one becomes a Christian?
19. Can one obey the gospel of Christ without repenting of his sins?

LESSON EIGHT

CONFESSION OF CHRIST

Another command of the gospel is that of confessing Christ as the Son of God. The word confess means to make known, to declare, to acknowledge, to express faith in another. This is what the Lord expects of each one that obeys him. One must be willing to go on record that he believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. If he is unwilling to make such a confession then it means that he is not ready to obey the Lord, and neither can he obey the Lord under such circumstances.

Christ taught the importance of this confession when he said, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 10: 32, 33). Let us notice a few things just here:

1. All are invited to confess Christ. It doesn't matter who they are or where they are, this truth still stands.
2. The confession must be made of Christ, not of one's sins. The Lord first of all wants one's allegiance then he will deal with that person's sins.
3. This confession must be made before men. There are to be witnesses of this. If one truly believes in Christ then he should want one and all to know of the faith that he has in him.
4. It is that individual who is willing to so confess Christ that the Lord has promised to confess before the

Father in Heaven. Just think of the blessing, of the honour, of having the Son of God to confess him before His Father in Heaven. And what does the Lord ask? Simply that he be confessed before man.

5. Those who refuse to confess him before men will be denied before the Father which is in Heaven. But it is not just that they refuse to confess him, but they deny him, and so he will deal with them accordingly. The same applies regardless of who they are or where they are from.

So in these two brief verses of scriptures so much is said. The Lord shows both sides, the blessings and the consequences, for those who would deny him. At the same time, he leaves it to each individual to decide for himself.

What about those who will not confess Christ? The Apostle John says, "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an anti-Christ." (2 John 7). As to who should confess the Lord, Paul writes, "And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2: 11).

Next, we observe that this confession is not only to be made with the mouth, but it is made unto salvation. Please note: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Romans 10: 9, 10). Now some have wrongly concluded that in order to be saved that all one has to do is to confess his

sins and acknowledge the Lord and that is the end of it. But what about faith? But one would vow that the confession is based on faith. Then what about repentance? Nothing is said about repentance here. So those who are seeking to find the easy way out often overlook many things. But the very next verse shows how faith and the confession of Christ fits into the plan of salvation. First, he shows how that one must believe in his heart, but that it is unto righteousness or unto salvation. That is, one is not saved, but is looking toward salvation or forward to salvation. Second, he points out that with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. The confession here is that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and again it is unto salvation, not into salvation, and there is a big difference. In other words, faith in Christ, and the confession that Christ is the Son of God, is not enough to bring salvation. One certainly cannot be saved without faith and such a confession, but there is yet more to do.

Finally, we have an example of where a man was required to make this confession in order to make him a fit subject for baptism. Let us read the story itself: "And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And

he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter: and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing." (Acts 8: 26-39). Now it seems rather clear as to what happened here. Philip taught this man concerning Christ and what he had to do to obey him. Then upon learning of the Lord, he wanted to comply with his will. But please note, before baptizing him he wanted to know if he believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. The eunuch answered in the affirmative, but it was only after this that Philip was willing to baptize him.

It is on the basis of this example, and in compliance with the other verses of scripture that deal with confessing Christ, that before we baptize anyone we ask him if he believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Once he says yes, then we are ready to proceed with the baptizing.

This confession is often referred to as the good confession and truly if any confession could be called a good confession then it would be this one.

So what do we have? For one to be saved then he must hear the gospel, believe it, repent of his sins, confess Christ as the Son of God, and then finally to be baptized for the remission of sins. The confession of Christ in this case is only part of the over-all plan of salvation or just one of the commands of the gospel. It alone cannot save anyone, but without it neither can anyone be saved. It becomes vital and powerful only when left in the position that the Lord put it in.

QUESTIONS

1. Explain the meaning of the word confess.
2. What must one confess to be able to become a child of God?
3. Read Matthew 10: 32, 33 and discuss it.
4. Who is invited to confess Christ?
5. Where is the confession to be made?
6. What will the Lord do as a result?
7. What about those who refuse to confess him?
8. How is the confession to be made?
9. Is the confession into salvation or unto salvation? What is the difference?
10. What did Philip require of the Eunuch before he would baptize him?
11. When did he confess? What did he confess?
12. Why was this confession so necessary?
13. Do we have a right to expect the same confession to be made today of the one who wants to be baptized? Why?
14. What is the confession often called?
15. Give the plan of salvation.

LESSON NINE

BAPTISM FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS

Probably one of the most controversial subjects of all time is that of baptism. Yet, it is a Bible subject and it is one of the commands of the gospel. It is no more important than the other commands, but at the same time it is just as essential as the others. No one command saves, but rather it is obedience to a combination of commands that brings the salvation that each one seeks.

In this lesson we want to learn as much about baptism as we can. We will start off by trying to determine its meaning. This is rather easy. The word baptism comes from a Greek word called baptizo and it means to dip, to plunge, to submerge, to immerse, to overwhelm, to bury. The scripture supports this. Listen: "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Romans 6: 3, 4). "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." (Colossians 2: 12). But what about sprinkling and pouring? They must be dismissed as the acts of men. They were introduced to replace the practice of immersion. Those who respect God's word could never accept such.

Next, we read in the Bible of different baptisms. On the other hand, Paul wrote in Ephesians 4: 5 that there is but one baptism. Now which one is binding today? When

we turn to Acts 8: 26-39 we read the story of Philip and the Eunuch. After Philip had taught this man concerning Christ and his will, then he wanted to be baptized. The record says, "And as they went on their way, they came to a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing." (Acts 8: 36-39). Now let us observe a few things:

1. Baptism came as a climax to this man's obedience to the Lord.
2. It was a burial, and a burial in water at that. So we have it spelled out.
3. But so there would be absolutely no room for quibbles on this point, then the record says that they both went down into the water, and to further clarify it, it says that this refers to Philip and the eunuch. Then to drive the point home, it says that after the baptizing that they both came up out of the water. Now who could argue with that? Surely no one that will accept the Lord's word as it is.

Then on turning to John 3: 3-5 we have the scriptures saying, "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the

second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Now that role does water play in one's salvation? That is simple. It pertains to baptism, and that is exactly what is under consideration. One is born again through the act of baptism as the Spirit directs him through the word of God. (1 Peter 1:23). We know that this coincides with scriptures like 1 Corinthians 12: 13; Romans 6: 3, 4 and others, that tell us that this act puts one into the Lord's kingdom or church or Christ.

Again, Paul writes to Titus, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." (Titus 3: 5). This washing of regeneration here alludes to the water of baptism, which is exactly what he is talking about. So baptism is a burial; and it is a burial in water; and this is the one baptism of the scriptures that is valid today.

We see the importance of baptism when we read various verses that tell us what it does. For instance, it saves: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 3: 21). The Apostle does not say that baptism only saves, but it does save when complied with as the Lord teaches in his word. But again, Christ himself says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16: 16). When does baptism save? When one believes and is baptized. To reject that would be to reject Christ.

Continuing, baptism is for the remission of sins: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2: 38). Saul was told to be baptized that his sins might be washed away. Listen: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22: 16). Again, it is a command of the Lord: "And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." (Acts 10: 48).

Apart from salvation, remission of sins, etc., it is through this obedience that one comes in contact with the blood of Christ, which actually makes it possible for one to have the remission of sins. We have Matthew 26: 28 saying that the blood of Jesus Christ was shed for the remission of sins. But when Peter told the people on the day of Pentecost that if they wanted to have the remission of their sins then they would have to repent and be baptized, then it means that in obeying these simple commands that one comes in contact with the blood of Christ which results in one's sins being remitted. Again, in Ephesians 1: 7 and Colossians 1: 4 we are told that it is through the blood of Christ that one obtains the forgiveness of sins, but Saul was told to have his sins washed away, or forgiven, that it was necessary for him to be baptized. Thus, it is clear once more that through the act of baptism that one comes in contact with the blood of Christ which washes away sins. Of course in Romans 6 we are told that we are baptized into the death of Christ, which means that through obedience to the command of the Lord that we reach the benefits of the Lord's death, meaning the forgiveness of sins.

Going on, we are told that through baptism that we enter Christ. Paul writes his Galatian brethren, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:26, 27).

Again, may it be emphasized that baptism only does not save and cannot save, but neither can one be saved without baptism. There is no such thing taught in the scriptures as an individual being saved and then later on being baptized. One must not only understand what baptism is but the purpose of it. Now one may have been immersed a dozen times but if he has never been immersed for the right purpose, then he has never been scripturally baptized. There is but one baptism and in order for it to be the one baptism of the Bible then it must be a burial in water, for the remission of sins, and to put one into the church that we read about in the Bible. Otherwise, it is but mockery.

But when does baptism save one? Only when the individual has heard the pure gospel of Christ, believed it, genuinely repented of his sins, confessed Christ as the Son of God, and thus has been baptized in compliance with the scriptures. Then and only then does baptism save. In other words, it is the last act of obedience that translates one from outside of Christ to that of being inside of Christ. It is the last step, in a series of steps, that leads one into Christ and his church.

Finally, through the act of baptism one is buried with the Lord in the waters of baptism and resurrected from the watery grave to walk in newness of life. This picture then the Lord's burial and his resurrection. Certainly, there is no way to improve on the Lord's way. Read Romans 6.

QUESTIONS

1. What is one of the most controversial subjects in the Bible? Why?
2. Is baptism a command of the gospel?
3. Is it any more important than any of the other commands of the gospel?
4. Does any one command save?
5. Define the word baptizo.
6. What does Romans 6: 3, 4 and Colossians 2: 12 teach?
7. What is sprinkling and pouring?
8. How many baptisms are there?
9. What is the one baptism of the Bible?
10. Read Acts 8: 26-39 and discuss it.
11. In what was the Eunuch buried?
12. How does John 3: 3-5 teach a burial?
13. What is the washing of regeneration?
14. Explain what baptism does.
15. Does baptism save? Does baptism only save?
16. Quote Mark 16: 16.
17. What must one do to have the remission of sins?
18. Is baptism commanded?
19. How does one come in contact with the blood of Christ?
20. Discuss Matthew 26: 28 and Acts 2: 38.
21. Also discuss Ephesians 1: 7 and Acts 22: 16.
22. What does it mean to be baptized into the death of Christ?
23. In what way does one enter Christ?
24. Is it possible for one to be immersed for the wrong purpose? If so, what must he do?
25. When does baptism save one?
26. How is the Lord's burial and resurrection pictured in the act of baptism?

LESSON TEN

BLESSINGS OF THE GOSPEL

Apart from the facts of the gospel, and the commands of the gospel, there are also blessings of the gospel. Of course, the facts are to be believed, the commands are to be obeyed, and the blessings are to be received by those who believe and obey the gospel. The Apostle Paul says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." (Ephesians 1:3). He also writes to his Roman brethren, "And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. (Romans 15: 29).

What are some of these blessings? There are so many, but we will list some of the prominent ones:

1. In obeying the gospel of Christ one receives the remission of his sins. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2: 38). This is another way of saying that one is saved (Mark 16:16), and that he has been born again. (John 3: 5). How wonderful it is to know that all of one's sins have been washed away and that he is now a new person and ready to begin life all over again.

2. Through the gospel one enters Christ. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" (Romans 6: 3). "For

ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (Galatians 3: 26, 27). “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (2 Corinthians 5: 17). Because we are in Christ then we have access to all spiritual blessings that the Lord has in store for those who belong to him.

3. In obeying the gospel we entered the body of Christ or the church. In 1 Corinthians 12 the Apostle Paul discussed at length the body of Christ and of course we are told that the body is the church. (Colossians 1: 18; Ephesians 1: 22, 23). Then he explains that it is through the act of baptism that we enter the body or the church. “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12: 13). The church is the greatest institution in all of the world. It cannot be destroyed, but will stand forever. How wonderful it is then to be a part of such a body, to be members of the Lord’s church.

4. We are now children of God, and therefore, Christians. “Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.” (1 Peter 4: 16). Why? Because there is salvation in the name of Christ: “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4: 12). Just think about it! In believing in Christ and obeying his teachings, he honors us by allowing us to wear his name. This is a great blessing within itself.

5. As Christians we are in position to worship the Lord. "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipper shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit: and in truth." (John 4: 23, 24). We are even warned not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together; "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." (Hebrews 10: 25). What a privilege and an honor to be able to meet with the Lord's people each first day of the week to worship the Lord. We ought not to count this as a responsibility or as a task, but as a privilege. The Lord himself has promised to be our honored guest, and surely we would not want to disappoint him. He said himself, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew 18: 20).

6. Then there is the blessing of fellowship. "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2: 42). We as Christians need the help and encouragement that our fellow Christians can give us. This is one of the purposes of the weekly assembly. The fellowship, that can come through such association, worship, and work can be a great blessing within itself.

7. We have the privilege of prayer. God does not hear everyone. The scriptures say, "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth." (John 9: 31). In other words, prayer is reserved for the child of God, the one who can approach God as his Father. However, even then his prayer must be in harmony with God's will

for it to be heard and his request granted. "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." (1 John 5: 14). But going on, the Hebrew writer says, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 11: 16). Here he is talking about the great blessing of prayer. How thankful we should be that regardless of the need, the problem, or whatever it may be that we need to pray to to Lord about, we can take it to him knowing that as his children that we can talk to him and that he will be sympathetic and understanding and will deal with our requests accordingly.

8. We have the honor of remembering him each first day of the week as we partake of the Lord's Supper. Paul speaks of it in this manner: "The cup of blessing which we bless, it is not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ." (1 Corinthians 10: 16). Truly it is a great spiritual blessing to be able to pay homage to him who died for us by remembering his body and his blood and we are made stronger because of it.

9. Being obedient to the gospel of Christ, we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Referring again to Acts 2: 38, Peter says that through repentance and baptism we receive the remission of our sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. To have God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit living in us is a blessing which has no equal. What honor could be bestowed upon us that would be any greater?

10. There is the blessing of being able to live for the Lord, to represent him here on earth. "And whatsoever ye do in word and deed, do all in the name of the Lord

Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” (Colossians 3: 17). Christ himself said, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matthew 6: 33).

11. We have the pleasure of teaching others the way of the Lord and knowing that the Lord will be with us always. What greater blessing could we be to others, and even to the whole world, than through teaching them the truth and converting them to Christ? Not only so, but how reassuring it is to know that as we strive to do the Lord’s will that he has promised us that he will be with us now and always. But listen to him: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” (Matthew 28: 19, 20).

12. Finally, the Lord has promised to give us a crown of life, or eternal life, if we keep his commandments and remain faithful to him. “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.” (Revelation 22: 14). “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” (Revelation 2: 10).

Now who said that the Lord doesn’t care for his own? Who said that the Christian life is not a happy life? who said that the Christian life has nothing to offer? Who said that the Christian has nothing to look forward to? The Christian life is the best life, the most rewarding life, that one can live. As such, one is free from his sin, leads a good and peaceful life, and has everything to live for and

to look forward to. He is blessed materially and spiritually. It all begins for him when he obeys the gospel. This then is really the beginning point of his life. This is the beginning of blessings unlimited.

QUESTIONS

1. Who does the Lord intend to receive the blessings of the gospel?
2. Read Ephesians 1: 3 and discuss it.
3. What does one receive in obeying the gospel of Christ?
4. How does one enter Christ?
5. Give some scriptures to support this?
6. Where are all spiritual blessings?
7. In what way does one enter the church?
8. Define the body of Christ.
9. What is the greatest institution in all the world? Why is it so great?
10. Quote 1 Peter 4: 16.
11. In what name is there salvation?
12. Who does the Lord seek to worship him?
13. Why are we warned not to forsake the assemblies?
14. Who is the honored guest at each worship service?
15. Explain the need of fellowship.
16. Does the Lord hear the sinner's prayer?
17. For whom is prayer reserved?
18. How must we pray?
19. Give the purpose of the Lord's Supper.
20. What gift does every Christian receive?
21. Who is to be put first in our lives?
22. In what ways are we blessed to be able to teach others?
23. To whom will the Lord give a crown of life?
24. Does it pay to be a Christian?

LESSON ELEVEN

PREACHING THE GOSPEL

Christ said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28: 19, 20). He also said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16: 15, 16).

From these statements, we want to observe a number of things:

1. Jesus Commanded the Apostles to Go.

The Lord not only told the Apostles to go, but he told them where to go. He said that they should go to all the world, to every nation of all the world, and even to every creature of every nation of all the world. This included everyone, with no one being overlooked. Even for that day it was quite a task, considering the fact that they didn't have the transportation system and communication system that we now have access to, but nevertheless, this was the Lord's instruction, and surely he would not have asked the impossible.

2. Jesus Commanded the Apostles to Go and preach.

In commanding them to preach, he also made it clear as to what should be preached. He said that the gospel

should be preached, and to be sure that there was no misunderstanding on this point, then he spelled it out, by saying, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16: 16).

3. Jesus said that the Apostles should baptize those who wanted to obey the Gospel.

Now first of all it should be understood that the Lord placed the responsibility upon the Apostles to take the gospel into all the world. Their responsibility was not to see that the people obeyed the gospel, or a lot of other things, but rather to see to it that the gospel was proclaimed to all. However, after the gospel had been preached, and there were those who wanted to obey it, then the Lord said that they should baptize them. Then he went a step further to emphasize the manner in which they were to be baptized. He said, "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." (Matthew 28: 19). Again, the Lord wanted no misunderstanding on the point.

4. Finally, Jesus taught that those who had been obedient to the Gospel should be further taught.

Again, notice that it was the Lord's command that they should go into all the world, preach the gospel to all, and then they should baptize those who wanted to obey the Lord. But now once this has been done, then there comes another responsibility, and that is, in the words of Jesus, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28: 20). This means then that the Lord took every precaution to handle the situation regardless of which direction it went in. He

further intended that those who obeyed the first principles of the gospel should not be left to die spiritually, but rather that they should be further taught and instructed in the way to live the Christian life. In this way he was not only showing an interest in their immediate salvation but also in their eternal salvation. He wanted them to be prepared to live the faithful Christian life, and this could be done only through additional teaching.

The foregoing is usually labeled as the great commission in that the command to preach the gospel includes the world and its message is so great and vital to the salvation of souls. But going on, we want to see how the Lord planned for this commission to be carried out. As we turn to Acts 1: 8 we have the Lord's plan brought down to a series of geographical steps. Please listen to his instructions as he speaks to the Apostles: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." As we read through the book of Acts we can see that this is exactly what happened. Let us observe more closely:

1. The gospel was to be preached to begin with in Jerusalem.

When we read Acts 1 and 2 we have this setting: The Apostles are in Jerusalem, the day of Pentecost comes, with Jews being gathered from all over the world. Then the Holy Spirit is poured out upon the Apostles enabling them to speak in the languages of those that were present, and it is then that they begin to preach the gospel for the first time in fact. As a result some three thousand gladly receive the word and are baptized and added to the church.

It was from this moment then that the gospel began to spread. It might also be pointed out that in the Lord's wisdom of having the gospel preached at this time, when so many people were gathered together from all over the world, that it meant that with various ones of these obeying the Lord, that the gospel began to spread with their return to their respective lands to tell their own people about it. For instance, we read of strangers from Rome being present. Then later we read of the church existing in Rome before Paul's visit there, and the scriptures do not suggest that Peter ever went there, or that any of the other Apostles had gone prior to this time. So what is the explanation? Evidently then, these strangers from Rome obeyed the gospel, returned home, taught their own people, and thus the church was established.

2. The gospel was to be preached throughout Judea.

Now Judea was in that area immediately around Jerusalem. That means it was no problem then in preaching to people of this vicinity. So in the days following, the gospel was preached in Jerusalem and throughout Judea. Then we read concerning Stephen's death, "And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except for the apostles." (Acts 8: 1). Continuing on, we read concerning those that were scattered, "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word." (Acts 8: 4). So the gospel was preached throughout Judea.

3. The gospel then was to be taken to the people of Samaria.

“Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.” (Acts 8: 5, 6). “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” (Acts 8: 12). Later on after Peter and John had visited with them, the record says, “And they when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.” (Acts 8: 25). So Samaria heard the gospel, according to the Lord’s plan.

4. Finally, the gospel was to be taken to all the world.

To prove that it was taken to all the world, then Paul said, “If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister.” (Colossians 1: 23). So the Lord’s plan for evangelizing the world was fully carried out within thirty years of time.

Now what would the Lord have us to do today? He would have us to do the same. That is, we also have the responsibility of taking the gospel into all of the world, to every nation of all the world, to every creature of every nation of all the world. We have a greater job in the sense that there are more people, but when we consider the modern day facilities at our disposal, such as transportation, communication, etc., then our job should be easier. But the Lord has placed the responsibility upon us and we must do it. Again, he would not ask us to do the impossible.

The world needs the gospel of Christ. It is the hope of the world. It is the only thing that can change it, help it, and save it. We who have this gospel must see to it that it is preached to all the world.

QUESTIONS

1. Read Matthew 28: 19, 20 and Mark 16: 15, 16 and discuss them.
2. Who did the Lord command to go?
3. Where did he say they should go?
4. Did the Lord ask for the impossible?
5. What did he command them to preach?
6. Who were the Apostles to baptize?
7. In whose name were they to be baptized?
8. What were the Apostles to teach those who had been baptized?
9. Why is Matthew 28: 19, 20 and Mark 16: 15, 16 called the great commission?
10. Quote Acts 1: 8.
11. List the geographical steps they should take to evangelize the world.
12. Where was the gospel to be preached to begin with?
13. Discuss Acts 2 and what happened.
14. How was it possible for the gospel to begin to spread throughout the world from the beginning?
15. What made it possible for the gospel to be taken throughout Judea?
16. Who took the gospel to Samaria?
17. Was the gospel ever taken to all the world?
Who said so? Where?
18. What is our job today?
19. Can we do it?
20. List some of the facilities that we have at our disposal.
21. Does the world need the gospel? Why?

LESSON TWELVE

PREACHING OTHER GOSPELS

While the New Testament emphasizes the importance of preaching the one gospel of Jesus Christ, nevertheless it speaks of other gospels. Paul warned, "For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him." (2 Corinthians 11:4). He continues, by saying, "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works." (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

Paul wrote the Galatians, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another, but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:6-9). Now what is the Apostle saying here? Let us notice the following:

1. The Galatians had received the pure gospel of Jesus Christ.

2. Paul was amazed that they had so soon turned to another gospel. However, he quickly explains that it is not another gospel in the sense of being a pure gospel.

3. There were some among them that would pervert or change the gospel of Christ which would render it worthless.

4. Then Paul includes himself when he says that though he, and others, or even an angel from heaven, should preach another gospel unto them, other than that which had already been preached, then they would be accursed of God. This means then that the pure gospel had already been preached and anything that might be preached that would contradict that could not be the pure gospel. Furthermore, regardless of who the person might be, of earth or of heaven, he could not expect to preach something new and have the Lord's blessing resting upon him, but would have to suffer the consequences.

5. Paul repeats himself to place emphasis on the warning.

Now it seems from the foregoing that there is just no room in the Lord's plan for another gospel, not to mention a multiplicity of gospels. Furthermore, it would likewise appear that it is a very dangerous proposition to get involved in that of preaching contrary to the gospel we read of in God's word, because the curse of God is pronounced upon those who do. Why? Because the Lord has given no man the right or authority to preach another gospel. To preach something else means that the pure gospel of Christ has been discarded.

In spite of the foregoing, we all know that there are many gospels being preached today. That is, many plans of salvation, conflicting doctrines, etc., are being preached. Which one is the pure gospel? How may we know that we have the right one? Please consider these suggestions:

1. Return to the Bible for the truth concerning the gospel. God's book is the source for all truth pertaining to the good news of Christ. In its pages you may read of the facts of the gospel (1 Corinthians 15: 1-4), and the commands of the gospel. (Mark 16: 15, 16; Acts 2: 38). All of your doubts, misunderstandings, and questions can be cleared up by simply letting God speak to you through his word.

2. Reject any teaching on the gospel plan of salvation that conflicts with the teaching of the scriptures. Man has not been given the authority to present his own opinions and ideas on this subject, and certainly no right thinking person will accept them.

3. Those gospels proclaimed by denominational preachers cannot be the one pure gospel of the Bible. Obedience to the gospel of Christ will not put you into a denomination and will not lead you to wear a man-made name or title. Please keep that in mind. Rather, the results of obeying the gospel of Christ will be salvation for you and that of being added to the Lord's church, thus making you a Christian only. Read Acts 2: 38, 47; Acts 11: 26.

4. Be on guard against those who teach "faith only", that one can be saved without baptism, etc. These are favorite doctrines taught by those who preach other gospels than the one we read about in the Bible. This warning is given because the Bible teaches that in order for one to be

saved that he must not only believe but he must be baptized as well. (Mark 16: 16).

5. Keep in mind that the majority are on the broad way that leads to destruction. (Matthew 7:13, 14). Sometimes those who preach other gospels appeal to their victims on the basis that the majority believe in these things. Just remember though that the majority are usually wrong.

6. These new and modern gospels that are being preached today represent division. They promote division. They openly preach division. On the other hand, the gospel of Jesus Christ promotes unity, oneness, and peace. Read 1 Corinthians 1 and also 1 Corinthians 12. Then read in John 17 how the Lord prayed that the Apostles might be one, and that all who would believe their teaching might be one.

7. Finally, remember that these other gospels do not save. Rather, they cause both those who preach them and those who accept them to be lost. Only the pure gospel of Christ has the power to save. (Romans 1: 16, 17).

It is through the preaching and teaching of error that division is brought about. Therefore, Paul warns, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrines which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." (Romans 16: 17, 18). According to this then we should be marking such preachers and they should be avoided. John wrote, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the

doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." (2 John 9-11). Then Christ warned, "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city and from the things which are written in this book." (Revelation 22: 18, 19).

Now many of those who preach other gospels are honest and sincere in what they teach. They have simply been deceived, but that does not remove the fact that they are teaching error and therefore they will still have to answer to God for it. Others, though, are not honest and sincere. Especially is this true of the hireling. He is not interested in souls, but is preaching only as a means of making a living. It doesn't matter what he preaches just so long as he continues to draw a salary. In either case, be not deceived by them.

Denominational groups today are talking a great deal about unity. In spite of that, they are dividing more and more. But if they really want unity then they should all return to the Bible for the one gospel, preach that only, and unity will be the result. It is that simple.

QUESTIONS

1. Is there more than one pure gospel?
2. Read 2 Corinthians 11: 4; 2 Corinthians 11: 13-15; and Galatians 1: 6-9.
3. Who preached to the Galatians?
4. To what other gospel had they been turned?
5. What would happen to those who preached another gospel?
6. Are other gospels being preached today?
7. Which one is the pure gospel of Christ?
8. To what book must we turn to know the truth pertaining to the gospel of Christ?
9. Can any teaching represent the truth if it conflicts with the scripture?
10. Has man been given authority to inject his opinions and ideas?
11. Is it possible for denominational preachers to proclaim the pure gospel of Christ?
12. Will obedience to the Lord's gospel put one into a denomination?
13. What will be the results of obeying the one pure gospel of the Bible?
14. Who preaches faith only?
15. On what road are the majority?
16. What do the modern gospels represent?
17. What does the gospel of Christ promote?
18. Do other gospels save?
19. How is division brought about?
20. Read Romans 16: 17, 18; 2 John 9-11; and Revelation 22: 18, 19.
21. Are those who preach other gospels honest and sincere in what they are doing?
22. What about the hireling?
23. How can Bible unity be brought about?

LESSON THIRTEEN

HINDERING THE GOSPEL

Discussing the fact that those who preach the gospel should also live by the gospel, or have support, Paul goes on to say: "Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ." (1 Corinthians 9:12). Although he had not hindered the gospel, he was certainly aware of the fact that it was possible for him or any one else to do so. The same would be just as true today.

Naturally those who preach and promote error do much to hinder the gospel of Christ. Just think of the far reaching results if this were not true. On the other hand, perhaps as much, or more harm, is done by members of the church themselves. Let us then think of the ways that we may hinder the gospel of Christ:

1. We hinder the gospel of Christ when we do not preach and teach it to others. The gospel is for all. It is to be shared with all. That is where we come in. The Lord has commanded us to take it to our fellowman (Mark 16: 15, 16). Now there are two ways we can do this. We can preach it by word of mouth or teach it by way we live. All should do some of both but many do none of either. It means then that when we fail to take the gospel to others then we are hindering its progress. This is a sin.

2. The gospel is hindered when we do not attend the assemblies. How is that? It is very simple. When we do

not attend worship we ourselves not only fail to worship the Lord but we fail to receive the spiritual food that we need to carry on for the Lord. But beyond that, we fail to set the proper example for others and to take advantage of the opportunity that is ours of meeting with a group of people who need to be taught the gospel by word of mouth and by example. Thus, the Hebrew writer exhorted, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." (Hebrews 10: 23-27).

3. We hinder the gospel when we fail to develop and grow as Christians. For when we are spiritually weak then we have need of someone teaching us instead of our having the ability to teach others. This is exactly what the Hebrew writer says: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For everyone that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Hebrews 5: 12-14).

4. We hinder the Lord's cause when we fail to live as we should. In this case we bring shame and disgrace upon

the Lord's name. The world points a finger of scorn at us and says that if that represents Christianity then it wants no part of it. We cause good and honest people to stumble. We set a bad example for others to follow. All of this hurts. The Lord would have us to not just wear the name Christian but to truly be Christian. He wants us to do all in his name to his glory. Listen to Paul, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." (Colossians 3:17). Peter exhorts, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other man's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator." (1 Peter 4:14-19).

5. We may hinder the Lord's work by simply neglecting our duty and responsibility. There are many members of the church that are not bad or immoral. They do not purposely and intentionally do anything that is bad or wrong. Others would say that they are very fine people. But their weak point is that they simply drift along neglecting to do many things that they should do. But neglect, failure to act, carelessness, etc., can be dangerous. We know that this is true with every day life. It is also true in the

spiritual realm. Thus, James says, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." (James 1:22). Also, read James 2 concerning faith only, those who have nothing to go with their faith, and James 4:17. Finally, we read, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him." (Hebrews 2:1-3).

6. We may hinder the gospel by failing to give of our means. The church depends on the members giving of its means in order to enable it to carry on its work of helping the poor and preaching the gospel. But suppose we do not give. That doesn't mean that the church will not be able to carry on since the other members may give. However, the church in such a case would be limited in its efforts. That is why the Bible says that when we fail to give that we are robbing God or that we are limiting him. He can do more as we give more to enable him to do more. So Paul exhorted, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come," (1 Corinthians 16:2). Let us remember that if we fail to give as we should it may be that will result in someone not being able to hear the gospel or that some one who is in need will have to do without. So it is a serious matter when we realize that souls are involved, as well as the physical welfare of various ones, including our own souls.

So you can see from the foregoing that while we may be blaming the religious world, and in particular the denominational group for our failures in being able to preach the gospel to the world, much of the fault may lie at our own feet. It is certainly true that these religious organizations can hinder the spread of pure New Testament Christianity, but we should never forget that as long as we are what we should be, and doing what the Lord wants us to do, that no outside force can prevent us from accomplishing the Lord's will, and that includes taking the gospel to the whole world. But so often the thing that is holding us back is our weaknesses, our failures, our lack of faith, our sins, and worlds of other things that may be in our hearts and lives.

May the Lord help us to have more faith, love, zeal, courage, and determination to take a stand for the truth, to live it in our daily lives, and to take it to a lost and dying world. Regardless, we'll either end up being an hindrance to the gospel or one who is a promoter of it. Let us make certain that we are in the latter catagory.

QUESTIONS

1. Is it possible for one to hinder the gospel?
2. Who are some of the ones who hinder the gospel of Christ?
3. Is it possible that some of these are members of the Church?
4. What happens when we do not preach the gospel to others?
5. In what two ways are we to teach others?
6. How do we hurt the Lord's cause when we do not attend the assemblies?
7. Read Hebrews 10:23-27 and discuss it.
8. What is necessary when we are spiritually weak?
9. How are Christians to live?
10. What do we do when we fail to live as we should?
11. Quote Colossians 3:17.
12. Read 1 Peter 4:14-19 and explain it.
13. Do Christians have any duties and responsibilities?
14. What does James 2 teach?
15. How shall we escape if we neglect our salvation?
16. In what way do we hinder the gospel when we fail to give as we should?
17. When do we rob God? How do we limit Him?
18. What does 1 Corinthians 16:2 teach?
19. Who can hurt the cause of Christ more than anyone else?
20. What kind of people does the Lord want us to be?