

AVONDALE CHURCH OF CHRIST

# Basics for Believers

Foundational Principles for Babes in Christ.

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# Lesson One

## Spirit, Truth, Practice

### Questions

1. What is the term commonly used to refer to Jesus' first sermon recorded in the Bible?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. List the characteristics that Jesus emphasized in Matt. 5:3-9:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Where do things that we say and do come from? \_\_\_\_\_
4. If we have meekness, how we view our own desires as compared to God's? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What characteristics did Jesus exemplify that we must strive to learn from Him? \_\_\_\_\_
6. How must we receive the implanted word? \_\_\_\_\_

**Discussion Question:** Many people have difficulty learning how to be meek. How can we learn to apply meekness in our lives today? What can we think about? What can we do to show meekness?

When one obeys the gospel the joy that comes from it is incomparable (Acts 8:39; 16:34). For some, however, that joy is soon replaced with a sense of fear or uncertainty. Fear of, "Am I going to make it?" Uncertainty of, "What do I do now?"

The great thing about the Bible is that God does not leave us empty handed. His word provides all that we need to learn how to be pleasing to Him (2 Tim. 3:16-17). In the Bible, God gives us certain principles that act as a foundation for our lives. As we grow as Christians we build on that foundation. When life is difficult, that foundation helps us to stand firm in Christ. In this lesson we will begin laying that foundation.

### SPIRIT

Matt. 5-7 is Jesus' first recorded sermon. It is commonly called the *Sermon on the Mount*. Observe in Matt. 5:3-9 that Jesus taught that men are blessed (happy) if they put on certain characteristics, often called the *Beatitudes*. We should be impressed with the fact that all of these characteristics have more to do with our attitudes rather than physical works. This is important, because if our attitude is not right when we are serving God, then our service is not pleasing to God. As we grow as Christians, it is essential that we learn what each of these characteristics means and how to apply them to our lives.

Jesus taught in Matt. 12:34, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." In other words, what we say and what we do is the direct result of the kind of attitude or spirit we have within us. If we are going to learn how to be faithful Christians, then we must first learn how to put on the right attitude. Discuss Gal. 5:24.

In this lesson we will look at just one characteristic as we begin to learn about the kind of attitude that pleases God. That is, *meekness*. There are many other characteristics that are just as important as meekness. But meekness is perhaps one of the most difficult to learn. It means, "Gentle, mild." It is closely related to humility. A meek person is one who views himself or his own personal desires as of little significance in comparison to others, especially God.

This is the kind of attitude Jesus had. He tells us to learn from Him so that we can be pleasing to God. "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly of heart" (Matt. 11:29). Having a meek spirit is especially important as we learn more of God's word. If we have meekness, then when God's word tells us how we must change our lives, we will gladly make the necessary changes, because we will acknowledge that God's ways are so far greater than our own (Isa. 55:8-9). James wrote in James 1:21, "Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and

## Questions

7. *By what did Jesus pray that God's people be sanctified?* \_\_\_\_\_
8. *What does it mean to be sanctified?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. *List various areas of our lives that we must follow God's word in order to be pleasing to Him:*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. *If we follow the teachings of Jesus and do what He says, what are we compared to?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. *Many people will call Jesus Lord, but who will actually be allowed to enter the kingdom?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. *If we hear the word without doing it, what are we doing to ourselves?* \_\_\_\_\_
13. *If we do not understand a lesson that is being taught, what can we do to ensure that we learn the lesson and obey God's word?*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Discussion Question:** What are some reasons people give for not doing everything the Bible says? Discuss God's answers to their objections.

receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls."

## TRUTH

In John 17:17 Jesus was praying to the Father when He said, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." As new Christians, it is important that we clearly understand the significance of Jesus' words. Sanctify means, "set aside to God." When a person obeys the gospel God sets them apart from the world. God makes that person His own. We are God's own "special people" (Titus 2:14, 1 Pet. 2:9).

Jesus said that we are sanctified by God's truth. Jesus also tells us what that standard of truth is. "(God's) word is truth." As New Christians we must understand that if we want to continue to be sanctified as God's special people we must do everything according to the truth; we must do everything according to God's word. Therefore, we must look to God's word as the guide for every aspect of our lives.

Jesus said in Matt. 7:24, "Therefore, whoever hears these sayings of Mine and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on a rock." Jesus warns us that there will be many people who claim to follow Him and who claim to love Him. But He clearly says that only those who do the will of the Father in heaven will enter the kingdom of heaven. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

## PRACTICE

The final principle we will discuss in this lesson is practice—putting into action the things that we read in the Bible. James wrote in James 1:22, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." This verse teaches us the importance of practicing what we read in the Bible. Many people are content to simply to go church on Sunday and Wednesday, but they spend little time at home *doing* what they learned at church. If we want to be faithful Christians, then we must have the mindset that whenever we read the Bible, we will do so with the intent to do what it says. Think about this when you listen to sermons and Bible classes. If you have a difficult time understanding what you must do, ask. Your brethren are here to help.

## Conclusion

Being a Christians is the most wonderful thing we can do in this life. It can be challenging, but if we apply energy and effort to learning what God says, then the rewards are definitely worth it. Therefore, let us put on the right spirit as we learn to serve God. Let us seek the truth and put all effort into practicing what we learn.

# Lesson Two

## The Greatest Commandments

### Questions

1. What is the first greatest commandment? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the second greatest commandment? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Why is it important to have love in all that we do? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What hangs on the two greatest commandments? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What is God's relationship to love? \_\_\_\_\_
6. List seven things that love always does: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. List nine things that love will not do: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Discussion Question:** Discuss the major differences between godly love and worldly love.

In Matthew 22:36 a man asked Jesus a very interesting question. "Teacher, what is the greatest commandment in the law?" Jesus answered the man in vs. 37-39 saying, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

What Jesus reveals in this passage is essential for Christians to understand. A common mistake that is made by many Christians is that we focus on the works that we do without considering the motivation behind those works. As we learned in lesson one, our attitude is just as important as the works that we do. Thus, Paul taught in 1 Cor. 13:1-2, though we do many great works, if we do not have love then our works are useless.

For that reason, let us examine why the two commandments that Jesus cited are the greatest. Jesus said that upon those two commandments "...hang all the Law and the Prophets." That is to say, the basis or purpose behind all that was written in the Old Testament is love for God and love for one's neighbors. There are many commandments that God gives His people, but there is only one goal or one desired outcome for those commandments, and that is love. God is love (1 John 4:8), thus, by giving us His commandments, God is showing us how to be like Him—how to love like Him. "Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart" (1 Tim. 1:5).

Why does God command us saying, "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them" (Matt. 7:12)? Because that is what love would do toward its neighbor! Why does God teach us to make sacrifices in our service to Him (Luke 18:29)? Because that is what love for God would do. You see, love is at the very basis of God's commandments. But this love is not the romantic, emotional love that is so often portrayed by Hollywood. That kind of love is in constant flux; changing with the mood of the individual. It is a temporary love. However, the love that God wants us to learn is constant and eternal.

As God is eternal, the kind of love that He commands reflects that same nature! "Love never fails" (1 Cor. 13:8, 13). This undying love is the love that God has for us. Thus, Jesus said that it is the kind of love that we should have for one another (John 13:34; 15:12).

### What Is Love?

In 1 Corinthians 13 the apostle Paul explains the nature of the love which God commands. He shows us what love will and will not do. From reading that chapter we can see that love is more of a choice than an emotion. Certainly, when we love something a certain desire is involved, but where human love is based on feelings, the love of God is constant regardless of feelings. How so? Whether we are angry or pleased, the love of God will desire the best for another

## Questions

8. *Why did God send His Son to die for us, even though we had sinned against Him?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. *What is the greatest manifestation of love?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. *If we want to show God that we love Him, what must we do?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. *To what extent should we love God?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. *If we love God in that way, then what will we strive to do with our lives?* \_\_\_\_\_
13. *How do we know where our treasure is?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. *How do we know whether or not our treasure lies in heaven?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. *How are we to love our neighbor?* \_\_\_\_\_
16. *How is our love for God related to our love for our neighbors?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Discussion Questions:** How does one motivate his/herself to do something that he/she may not necessarily want to do?

Discuss what it means the love the Lord as described in Matt. 22:37.

person—it is constant, unlike our emotions which are constantly changing.

Love is a choice. Whatever we *choose* to put first in our lives, that is what we love. This is the love that parents have for their children, even when their children make many mistakes. It is the love that God's people have for Him, even when serving Him results in great sacrifice (Hab. 3:17-19). This is the love that God has for us even when we sin against Him. According to Col. 1:21, before we became Christians we were enemies of God. In spite of that, God still chose to send His Son to die on the cross for us. Why? Because He loves us (John 3:16). In fact, as Jesus said, to give one's life for his friends is the greatest form of love (John 15:13). Thus, the kind of love that God commands us to have is a sacrificial love. It is a love that motivates us to serve God and to do things for our brethren, even when our flesh is saying, "I don't want to!"

### **Love the Lord**

How do we show love toward God? Jesus tells us in John 14:15, "*If you love Me, Keep My Commandments.*" Many people say that they love God and Jesus, but if we want to *show* God that we love Him then we must obey Him. But, we are not robots. God created us with desires and emotions. While we are to show our love for God through our obedience, we are also commanded to "*love the Lord your God with all you heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.*"

In other words, our love should involve our whole being. While love is a choice, whatever we choose to put first in our lives will inevitably hold the most value in our hearts as well (Matt. 6:21). So often this principle is overlooked, so that many Christians view their obedience to God as nothing more than items on a to-do list. But if we are to love the Lord the way He says to, then we must do more than simply obey; we must seek to honor and glorify Him with our lives. This kind of love goes far deeper than attending church services and reading our Bibles. It motivates us to pursue the will of God in every facet of our lives—from the way we think about other people (2 Cor. 5:16), to the kind of entertainment we choose (2 Tim. 3:4).

### **Love Your Neighbor**

There is very little a person will not do in order to care for his/her own personal needs. Much more difficult, however, is to have that same attitude toward our neighbors. We live in a world where people only serve others in so much that it benefits themselves. God teaches us to serve others for the sake of the other person's best interest, even when it means making personal sacrifices (1 John 3:16-18). This is the lesson Jesus taught in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37).

As we close, consider this: If we love God we will keep His commandments. The outcome of fulfilling God's commandments is love for one's neighbors. Thus, if we are not loving our neighbors, then we are not keeping God's commandments; if we are not loving our neighbors then we are not loving God (1 John 2:20).

# Lesson Three

## Bible Authority

### Questions

1. *What was the rock upon which Jesus said that He was going to build His church?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. *How much authority does Jesus have?* \_\_\_\_\_
3. *What realms are under His authority?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. *To what does the term "Bible authority" refer?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. *What is another word for Testament?* \_\_\_\_\_
6. *To what does the Old Testament refer?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. *When was the New Testament established?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. *Why was there a need for a New Testament?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. *When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, how did He describe the fruit of the vine?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Discussion Questions:** If one truly believes in who Jesus is, how should their faith affect their manner of life?

Faith is essential for eternal life. But even faith, if it is not guarded with respect for the authority of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, will not save a person. While many believe in God, only those who have a proper respect for His authority actually do His will. This is the very point Jesus was emphasizing in Matt. 16:18 when He said, "Upon this rock I will build My church." The Rock upon which Jesus is building His church is our faith in His authority as the Christ, the Son of God. Those who are built upon that rock submit to Him in all things as their Lord and King. "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on a rock" (Matt. 7:24).

The great commission, as Jesus gave it in Matt. 28:18-20, emphasizes our need to respect the authority of Jesus Christ. "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them...teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you..." (John 8:24; Heb. 5:9).

### **New Testament Vs. Old Testament**

Bible authority refers to the authority of God as it is expressed to us through the Bible. That is why it is so important that we know how to use the Bible. But many people get confused about how we are supposed to use the Old and New Testaments. Some only read the New Testament, while some use the Old Testament and the New Testament in exactly the same way. But how are we to use them? What is the difference between them?

The word "testament" is another word for covenant. The Old Testament refers to the Scriptures which God revealed when He was in a covenant relationship with the nation of Israel. That covenant is defined in Deut. 5:2ff. While that covenant was in effect, the Israelites offered sacrifices, worshiped in a temple and required the use of priests to mediate between them and God (Heb. 9:1-10).

The reason it is referred to as the "Old Testament" is because God has since made a "new" covenant for people who are alive today. We are told in Heb. 10:3-2 that when sacrifices were offered in the Old Testament, the sins of the people weren't actually taken away, because the blood of animals could not take away sin. God's purpose for that covenant was not to take away the sins of the world, but to prepare the world for the coming of the Savior (Gal. 3:24-25). Though sins were not taken away under that covenant, God did promise the coming of a new and better covenant in which He would bring salvation for all (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:7-13).

Jesus established that new covenant. He did not shed the blood of bulls and goats, but He shed His own blood, the blood of the Son of God, which has the power to take away sins (Matt. 26:28). Therefore Jesus is able to forgive the sins of every person who comes to Him (Heb. 10:10, 12, 14).

What does this have to do with Bible authority? Everything! Since Jesus established a new covenant do we offer animal sacrifices

## Questions

10. Since the priesthood changed in the New Covenant, what changed with it? \_\_\_\_\_
11. Why can't we obey the Old Testament and the New Testament at the same time? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. How are we supposed to use the Old Testament? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. From where does Jesus get His authority? \_\_\_\_\_
14. Who sent the Holy Spirit? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. How did apostles and prophet know what to say? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
16. What did the apostles and prophet do with what was revealed to them? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
17. What two passages clearly state the ultimate source of the authority of the Scriptures? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
18. What are we to do in the name of the Lord? \_\_\_\_\_
19. What three ways does God use to express His will for man in the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Discussion Questions:** Discuss the kinds of things people do in the church today where they try to use the O.T. for justification.

Discuss briefly commands, example, necessary inferences.

anymore? No. Why? Because we are no longer under the old covenant. When Jesus established the new covenant God gave us a new law to go with that new covenant. *"For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law"* (Heb. 7:12). We cannot live under the new law and the old law at the same time, for in keeping one law we would have to disobey the other. Also, if we try to keep the old law, it is the same as saying that Christ's law is not good enough for us. That is why Paul said in Gal. 5:4, *"You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace."* If we want to be pleasing to God today, then we must serve Him according to what the New Testament says, not the Old Testament.

Does this mean that we do not need the Old Testament? No. We still need it, but we don't follow it as our law. The Old Testament is there to teach us wisdom for serving God (1 Cor. 10). Even though we do not keep its ordinances (temple worship, sacrifices, etc.) we are still required to have the same kind of respect and obedience that God expected of people in the Old Testament. Therefore Paul said in Rom. 15:4, *"For whatever things were written before were written for our learning..."* In 2 Tim. 3:15 Paul told Timothy, *"that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation."* A simple way of explaining it is this: The Old Testament is for leading us to Christ and the New Testament is for living in Christ.

### New Testament Authority

Because the New Testament expresses God's law for today, it also expresses the authority of Christ and His will for the church today. In spite of this, some people claim that the New Testament is from men and that we do not have to do everything it says. However, if we consider the following points, we will find that the New Testament is not only from God, but that it is also God's law for today:

**God** (ultimate authority): Heb. 1:1—God speaks to man. **Jesus:** Heb. 1:1-3—God speaks to man through Jesus Christ (See also Heb. 12:25). **Holy Spirit:** John 14:26; 16:13-16—sent by Christ to reveal the words of Christ, which are also the words of God. **The Apostles:** John 13:13; 1 Thess. 4:8—received God's word from the Holy Spirit. **New Testament Scriptures:** 1 Cor. 2:7, 10; 14:37; 2 Thess. 3:14: The apostles put the revelation of the Holy Spirit into writing for all generations. **1 Tim. 3:16-17:** Therefore, all Scripture is inspired of God (2 Pet. 1:19-21)

Because the New Testament contains the words of Christ today, that is where we must get authority for everything that we do. If we want to do something, we cannot say, "But they did it in the Old Testament," because of what Paul said in Gal. 5:4. We must follow Christ, for salvation can only come through Him (Acts 4:12). The church is His body and He is the head (Col. 1:18). Therefore, as it says in Col. 3:17, *"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus..."* We must be careful not to go outside the doctrine of Christ to justify our works (2 John 9-11).

### Conclusion

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce you to subject and importance of Bible authority. In future discussions we will actually learn how to study the Bible in order to understand God's will and how to know what He gives us authority to do today.



# Lesson Four

## Grace, Faith, Obedience

### Questions

1. What is God's grace? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What does God's grace provide for man? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What is our condition without God? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. By what are we saved? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Define faith: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. If we have faith in something, what will our faith motivate us to do? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. In Heb. 11:13, what does it mean that they some the promises "afar off"? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. What does it mean that they were "assured of them"? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. What does it mean that they "embraced them"? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Can we believe anything we want and still be pleasing to God? \_\_\_\_\_
11. What must we believe in order to be pleasing to God? What must be the pattern for our faith? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Discussion Questions:** How does true faith affect a person's life?

According to the gospel there are several key principles that must be perfectly balanced in order for us to be saved: 1) the grace of God, 2) man's faith, 3) and man's obedience. The Bible paints a beautiful picture of these three principles working together in unison for man's salvation. Though many people try to deny the necessity of one or more of these principles, in this lesson we will see how they all work together to bring us closer to God.

#### Grace and Salvation

God's grace is His goodness or good will which He directs toward mankind. Since all things are created by God, it stands to reason that everything is from Him and given by His grace. In Gen. 2:7 God gave man the breath of life; therefore our very lives are given to us by His goodness. In Matt. 5:45 and Acts 17:28 we find that God sustains us and provides for us. In Eccl. 5:18-19 we find that even our ability to work with what the earth provides and then to enjoy the fruit of our labor is a gift from God. Based on these passages we can reasonably conclude that God's grace is a gift—not something to be earned as wages.

The Bible also teaches us that God's grace not only provides for our physical needs, but for our spiritual needs as well. Because of our own sins, we are spiritually destitute and helpless without God (Eph. 2:12-13). Though we are helpless, God has provided a means of salvation. His *grace* has been given to us for salvation. "*For by grace you have been saved through faith...*" (Eph. 2:8). Though we did not deserve it, God sent His Son. Though we were His enemies, Jesus died on the cross so that we could be saved (Rom. 5:10).

#### Faith and Salvation

Faith is defined in several ways: belief, confidence, trust, etc. Faith is really all of these things. It is an individual's belief in something that exists, but which he/she cannot see or touch. It is trust or having confidence in what they cannot see (2 Cor. 5:7). True faith motivates a person to act upon what they cannot see, as if it were a reality. "*These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having **seen them afar off** were **assured of them, embraced them** and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth*" (Heb. 11:13).

No man has ever seen God (1 John 4:12), but we know He exists because of faith. Therefore, faith is essential to our salvation (Heb. 11:6). However, in the Bible we learn that we cannot believe just anything and still be pleasing to God (2 Thess. 2:12). True faith does not just make something up and then believe it exists. Rather, it takes God's word, which reveals spiritual truths which we cannot see, and then puts all confidence in the reality of those truths (1 Cor. 2:9-10). Therefore it is written in Rom. 10:17, "*for faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.*" If we want our faith to be true faith, then we must put all confidence in the things revealed in the Bible.

There are many people who believe in things that God has not revealed. That is why Jesus commands us to preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15), so that all can hear the truth of God's word and decide for themselves if they are willing to believe the truth. If we believe the gospel and do what it says, then Jesus promised that we can know the truth and that the truth will make us free (John 8:31-32). If we want salvation then we must be willing to put away all of the lies that we have been believing and start putting our faith in the truth of God's word.

## Questions

12. How do grace and faith work together for our salvation? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

13. If something is a gift, does that mean that we should not have to do anything to receive it? \_\_\_\_\_

14. How can God offer us salvation as a gift and then expect us to obey Him at the same time? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

15. According to Titus 2:11-2, what is God's grace meant to do for us? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

16. What do we observe about the faith of the people listed in Heb. 11? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

17. What is sin? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

18. Why do most people choose to live in sin? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

19. If we want to overcome the effects of sin? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Discussion Questions:** Discuss various examples of Bible characters whose lives manifest harmony between grace, faith, and obedience.

Because of our need for faith, the Bible teaches us that Grace and faith must be combined for salvation. "**For by grace you have been saved through faith...**" (Eph. 2:8). By God's grace salvation has been offered to us. But in order for God's grace to save us, we must be willing to believe in the truth of the gospel message.

### The Necessity of Obedience

So far we have learned that the only way for us to be saved is for God to extend His grace to us for salvation. We have also learned that in order to take advantage of God's grace we must believe in the gospel. But something else we learn from the passages that we have looked at so far is that even though God's grace is a gift, it does not negate our responsibility to work. In Eccl. 3:12-13 we learned that the ability to enjoy the fruit of our labor is the gift of God, but if we do not labor, we cannot enjoy that gift (2 Thess. 3:10; Prov. 20:4; 24:30-34). Therefore, by grace God provides a means for salvation. By faith we believe in God's power to save. But only when we obey God can we actually receive that salvation! "*And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him*" (Heb. 5:9).

This truth causes many people great difficulty, because they cannot understand how something can be a gift and yet still require us to work in order to receive it. In fact, this principle is very simple when we look at the whole Bible. When God commands obedience, He is not asking us to earn His grace. Rather, He is asking us to obey BECAUSE of His grace. By grace He gives us salvation, but He says that if we want to receive and retain that salvation, we must use His grace to learn how to obey Him. "**For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age**" (Titus 2:11-12).

It is like a Father giving his son a car for his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. The father does not ask the son to pay him back for the car, but he does lay down some ground rules for using the car: keep it clean, keep it maintained, use it responsibly, etc. The car is a tool—a means for the son to travel—but in order for the son to take advantage of the gift he must use it per his father's instructions. If he disobeys his father and is reckless with the car, the car will be taken away. God is our Father and His grace is for salvation, but in order for us to benefit from His grace we must use it per instructions.

In Hebrews 11 we read of many people who lived by faith. One thing we must observe is that every individual mentioned DID something by faith (vs. 4, 7, 8, 17, 13). Remember, our faith is our confidence in the reality of spiritual things that we cannot see (Heb. 11:1). If we are truly confident that God is real and that He is our creator, then our faith will motivate us to obey Him (Heb. 11:6). If we believe in the kingdom of God and if we believe in heaven, then we will live like people who are a part of that kingdom and we will do those things that help us to enter the kingdom (Matt. 7:21).

Sin is disobedience to God's commands (1 John 3:4). When we sin we fall short of God's glory (Rom. 3:23). Those who choose to live in sin do so because they have not fully believed in God (Heb. 3:12). But if we want to overcome the effects of sin by the grace of God, we must not only believe in the gospel, we must also strive to stop sinning by obeying the gospel (Rom. 6:16; 2 Thess. 1:8).

### Conclusion

Grace, faith, and obedience provide a harmonious relationship toward the salvation of our souls. The grace of God provides a means for salvation through the gospel. By faith we acknowledge the power of the gospel for salvation. Through our obedience we take advantage of God's gracious gift.

# Lesson Five

## The Church that Belongs to Christ

### Questions

1. *When were most of the churches in existence today established?*  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. *When did Jesus say His church would be established?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. *What would accompany the establishment of the church?* \_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. *Where in the Scriptures do we read of that event taking place?*  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. *Who is building the Lord's church?* \_\_\_\_\_
6. *According to Acts 2:47, how is the church built?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. *Why is the church sometimes called the "church of Christ"?* \_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. *List the different positions that Christ gave for organization in His church according to Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 3:8-13?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Discussion Questions:** Discuss how the apostles and prophets continue to aid in the growth of the church today even though there are no more apostles or prophets alive today.

Every Christian is a member of the Lord's church. But for many it has become difficult to work through the thick fog of human tradition in order to clearly see the true nature of the church that Jesus established. The purpose of this lesson is to look at what the Bible says about the church, why the church is said to be "of Christ", and what that means for churches and Christians today.

### The Establishment of the Church

Most of the churches in existence today were established sometime within the last few hundred years. In the Bible, however, we are told that the church that belongs to Christ was established shortly after Christ's death on the cross. In Mark 9:1 Jesus told those who were with Him that the kingdom would come with power during their lifetime. He went on to say in Acts 1:8 that that power would come with the arrival of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2:1-4 we read about the arrival of the Holy Spirit and the power that accompanied Him, showing us that that was the time when Jesus established His church. The year was around 33 A.D. Understand that the church and the kingdom are one. Jesus is Head of the church and King in His kingdom.

In Matt. 16:18 Jesus said that He would build His church. In Acts 2:47, after the church was established, we are told that Jesus began adding to the church those who were being saved. Thus, in the Bible we learn that the church that is of Christ was not established many years after Christ's death, nor was it established by men or built by men. Rather, it was established by the Lord Jesus Christ during the first century. The church is "of Christ" because those who are members of the church are purchased by the blood of God (Acts 20:28). Therefore, Paul was able to say in Rom. 16:16, "*The churches of Christ greet you.*"

### The Organization of the Church

Initially, the consisted of the apostles who bore witness of Jesus' resurrection, and there were those who believed in their preaching. But Jesus promised the apostles before His death that the Holy Spirit would "*guide them unto all truth*" (John 16:13). Therefore, as we read through the book of Acts we see organization being developed by the revelation of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 6:1-7 men first filled the role of servants (later termed deacons, 1 Tim. 3:8-13) in the church. In Acts 8:14-17 we see the apostles imparting the gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as prophecy. As the gospel began to spread from Jerusalem we see men such as Philip proclaiming the gospel to every man (Acts 8:4-5, 35). Those who were devoted to proclaiming the good news became known as evangelists (Acts 21:8). By Acts 11:30 elders had been appointed in the churches in Judea and in Acts 14:2 elders were being appointed in every church. By about 61 A.D. when Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesians, all of the responsibilities which Christ gave for the organization of the church had been fully revealed and identified in Eph. 4:11.

**Apostles:** ambassadors, eye witnesses sent by Christ to the world (Acts 1:8). Also, through them the will of God was revealed by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

**Prophets:** spokesmen for God. Through them the will of God was revealed by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 3:5; 2 Pet. 1:19-21).

**Evangelists:** messengers, proclaimers of the good news of the gospel. They preach God's word to all men (2 Tim. 4:2, 5). These are also known as preachers or ministers and are not to be confused with pastors.

**Pastors:** also known as elders, bishops, shepherds or overseers. While an evangelist proclaims, the pastors or elders "shepherd" the local churches through oversight and teaching. They are not "lords," but guides within the local churches (1 Pet. 5:1-4).

**Teachers:** These instruct the church in the word of God.

# Questions

9. Define the universal church: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Define the local church: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. Which form of the church did Jesus organize? \_\_\_\_\_
12. What three basic kinds of works did Jesus give His church to do?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. What kind emphasis do we see in the work Jesus gave His church?  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. In contrast, what do many of the churches in existence today emphasize in their work? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. What is the church? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
16. Of what is the church the “pillar and ground”? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
17. What does Ps. 110:3 say God’s people will be? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Discussion Questions:** Consider the principles emphasized New Testament teachings about the church. Discuss the kind attitude needed among Christians and churches today in order to continue that emphasis (see Rom. 12:1-2).

These positions, with the addition of deacons (1 Tim. 3:8-13), make up the organization that Christ gave to His church. It should also be pointed out that each of these positions were given to local churches, but no organization was ever given to the universal church—there is no organization beyond the elders connecting one congregation another (except in Christ who is the Head of all, Col. 1:18).

## The Work of the Church

In Eph. 4:11-12 we are told that Jesus organized the church in this way in order that the church might accomplish three very specific tasks: **Equipping the saints:** this refers to giving the necessary (spiritual) tools to the saints through teaching, enabling them to live as Christians and to do the work of God. **Work of ministry:** this means serving needs. Christians are to be equipped in order to serve the spiritual needs of all men, and in some situations, the physical needs (2 Tim. 3:17; 2 Cor. 8:4). **Edification:** this means to build up. The goal of the church is to be built up to the fullness of Christ, to completely do His will and to be like Him (Eph. 4:12-16).

Throughout the New Testament these are the only three kinds of works that Jesus gave for His church to do. We should observe that the work given to the church is spiritual in nature and emphasis. The organization that Jesus gave the church is designed specifically to do the work that He gave the church. Some churches feel the need to change their organization because they don’t believe that the Scriptural organization is sufficient. The only reason this would be true is if we change the kind of work that the church does. But if we limit the work of the church to only that which God gave her, then God’s pattern for church organization is not only sufficient, it is the supreme.

## Churches of Christ Today

The church is not a building. It is made up of individuals who believe in Christ and submit to Christ in baptism for the forgiveness of their sins (Acts 2:41, 47). Those who become Christians are committed to spiritual things. They must strive to be spiritually minded (Rom. 8:6) that they may do God’s will in all things (Rom. 12:1-2).

Contrary to modern-day opinion, the church is not a charitable organization—her work is not to provide food, clothing, and other physical needs for the poor. These are good work and God says that as individuals we should do this as much as we can (Gal. 6:10). But this kind of work was not given to the church as a collective body. Rather, the church is described as “*the pillar and ground for the truth*” (1 Tim. 3:15). Thus, the goal of the church must be to preach the truth and thereby care for the eternal/spiritual needs of men, not the temporal/physical needs. A full belly will not help a person who does not have salvation.

In Ps. 110:3 it says that God’s people “*shall be volunteers.*” This means that members of the Lord’s church obey Him because they want to. This is especially important, but in our culture many people believe that God is pleased with them as long as they do the bare minimum of what He asks. Many will not serve in the church unless they are pestered and practically forced to do the work. Those who behave in such a way should understand Christ is not pleased, nor is He living in them (Matt. 25:24-28; Gal. 2:20).

In the church that belongs to Christ, we are to avoid such an attitude. In Luke 17:10 Jesus says that after we have done all that we have been commanded, we should say, “*We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.*” In Titus 2:14 and 3:1 we are told that Jesus sacrificed Himself so that we will be “zealous” and “ready” for every good work. Thus, if we truly belong to Christ, and if we are to be members of His body, then let us be zealous for every good work without complaining or making excuses. Let us strive to function as the Lord’s church and to accomplish the work that Jesus gave us. When we do that then we are truly the church that belongs to Christ.

## Questions

1. *What does the Hebrew writer call the list of principles included in Heb. 6:1-2?*  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. *What two elements are men made of?* \_\_\_\_\_
3. *What happens to each of those elements when a man dies?* \_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. *God is the God of the \_\_\_\_\_ not the \_\_\_\_\_*
5. *How does the above truth prove the man has an eternal spirit?*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. *Eventually, what will God do with the spirits of men?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. *What term is used to describe Jesus in relationship to the resurrection? \_\_\_\_\_*  
*What does that term mean?* \_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. *When will the others follow Christ in the resurrection?* \_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Lesson Six

## The Resurrection from the Dead

The resurrection from the dead is one of the most fundamental elements of the Christian faith. The Hebrew writer lists the resurrection from the dead as one of the “*elementary principles*” of Christ (Heb. 6:1-2). It is what every Christian should hope for. And we are told several times in the Scriptures that it is something that we should be continually preparing for. Therefore, in this lesson we will consider what the Bible says about the resurrection, what we can expect to happen, and how we can make ourselves ready for that day.

### The Spirit and the Resurrection

There are some people who believe that men do not have an eternal spirit. God, on the other hand, teaches us that humans have two components: physical and spiritual. Eccl. 12:7 illustrates how when a person dies his/her physical body returns to the dust from which it was made, but the spirit returns to God who gave it. During His ministry Jesus reasoned with a group of Jews called the Sadducees who believed that man did not have a spirit, therefore they did not believe in a resurrection. In answer to that belief Jesus presented the following argument: “*But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?’ God is not the God of the dead, but of the living*” (Matt. 22:31-33). Notice the point that Jesus made: Since God IS (present tense) the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, those men must still be alive since God is the God of the living, not the dead. If their bodies are dead, how then can they still be alive? They are alive because they have an eternal spirit. Therefore, since men have a spirit, God will at some point raise all men from the dead in the resurrection.

This truth is fundamental and essential for understanding eternal life. While on earth, our spirits are clothed in a physical body. How we live while in this body will affect what kind of life we will have in eternity—in the resurrection.

### Jesus Is the Firstfruits

Every person who has faith in Jesus Christ must believe in the resurrection because Jesus Himself was raised from the dead. In fact, Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 15:17-19 that if Christ did not raise from the dead then all men are lost, we are still dead in our sins, and Christians are the most pitiable people alive. But we know that Jesus rose from the dead because it is recorded in the Bible, and He was seen by over 500 people at once (1 Cor. 15:3-8).

We are also told that Jesus is the “*firstfruits*” of those who will be raised (1 Cor. 15:20-23). What this means is that the resurrection of Jesus was the first of many more to come. When Jesus died He gained access for men into heaven, and when He rose from the dead He paved the way for those who follow Him. Therefore, when Christ comes again, everyone who attains salvation through Him while they are alive will be raised after they’ve died, just as He was, and will join Him in eternal life.

### The Second Coming

Notice what it says in 1 Cor. 15:23, “...*afterward, those who are Christ’s at His coming.*” What Paul refers to is the second coming of Christ. Jesus came to the earth once when He was born and lived as a

## Questions

9. *How will Christ arrive when He comes again?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. *What should be our attitude toward the second coming? Why?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. *What will happen in the resurrection (order of events)?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. *What day will Christ come again?* \_\_\_\_\_
13. *Who knows when He is coming?* \_\_\_\_\_
14. *Paul describes Christ's coming as what?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. *Since we do not know when Christ is coming, when should we make ourselves ready?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Discussion Questions:** Discuss how Christians should be preparing for Christ's coming today.

man and then died for our sins (Heb. 9:28). But when He comes the second time, He will not be born as before, but He will descend from heaven in a cloud (Luke 21:27-28; Acts 1:9-11).

The event of Christ's second coming is what all Christians should be looking for and eagerly waiting for, because that is the moment when we will receive our hope of eternal life. "*To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation*" (Heb. 9:28).

Read John 5:28-29: Jesus will not raise some people and leave others behind. Rather, Jesus said that the "*hour is coming*" when these things take place. And when that hour comes, both the righteous and the wicked will be raised at the same time: the righteous will be raised to eternal life, the wicked will be raised to eternal condemnation. In 1 Thess. 4:16-17 Paul wrote that the dead will rise first, then those who are still alive on the earth will be taken up to join them in the sky and they will be with Christ forevermore.

We are also told in several passages that when we are raised we will be given new bodies—eternal, spiritual bodies that cannot die (1 Cor. 15:35-38, 42-44). We will be like Christ as He is now (1 John 3:1-3).

### **In The Twinkling Of An Eye**

Over the centuries many doctrines have been invented concerning the second coming of Christ which are not taught in the Bible. Some believe that Jesus is going to secretly take away the righteous while the wicked remain on the earth for seven years ("The Rapture"). Some people believe that they can foretell what day the Lord will come. But if we want to receive the promises of God, we must put our hope in what the Bible says, not in the dreams of men.

In the Bible, we are told that the second coming of Christ will take place day that no one knows—only the Father knows. Mark 13:32: "*But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.*" Paul describes that day as coming "*in the twinkling of an eye*" (1 Cor. 15:52), and "*as a thief in the night*" (1 Thess. 5:1-2). Many people will say that they know when the Lord is coming, but do not listen to them. Instead, we are told to be ready for He may come at any moment.

### **Be Ready**

It is important for us to understand that we do not know the day or the hour when these things will take place. Since we do not know, we will not be able to make ourselves ready at the last minute. Therefore, we are instructed many times to make ourselves ready now and to constantly be preparing ourselves. Jesus gave the parables of the *Ten Virgins* (Matt. 25:1-13) and *The Foolish Rich Man* (Luke 12:16-21) to teach us to be ready always for His coming. In 1 Thess. 5:3-10 Paul teaches us to "*not sleep*" but to "*watch and be sober.*" In other words, don't think that it is time to relax (as if it were night and time to rest), but always be working (as in the day time), always eagerly waiting and ready for when the Lord comes.

How do we make ourselves ready? Flee from sin and pursue godly things (1 Tim. 6:11-12). Be rich toward God through Good works (1 Tim. 6:18-19). Live godly and righteously as if you see the day of the Lord coming even now (2 Pet. 3:10-13). Strive with all diligence to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:17-18). Love your brethren (1 Pet. 1:22-23). Strive ever diligently to be like Christ that you may attain to the resurrection from the dead (as Paul did, Phil. 3:7-14).

# Lesson Seven

## Worship

### Questions

1. Why is it important for us to worship God?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What does Jesus say about the kind of worshippers God is seeking in John 4:23-24? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What do those worshipers seek to do? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What does the term "worship" mean? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What does Lev. 10:3 teach us about the kind of attitude we need to have in our worship?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. If we truly desire to honor God, what will we do? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. What is the standard of truth?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. What is no longer required for worshipping God today? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Why is that no longer required?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. When our worship is in Spirit and in truth, where is God's presence? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

In John 4:23-24 Jesus says that since God is spirit, He is seeking worshippers who will worship Him in Spirit and in truth. This is an important passage to understand, because the worshippers that Jesus refers to are Christians. Throughout the Scriptures, worship has been an integral part of life for those who seek God. Since God is our Creator, He gives us everything. There is nothing that we can give Him that He "needs", but as His creation we should seek to give Him the glory and honor that He deserves. See Ps. 18:1-3

Though there are many forms of worship being practiced in the world today, true worship honors God according to His will (i.e., the way He wants to be worshipped). As His people we need to learn that way so that we can be pleasing to God.

### Worship

The term worship means to "bow down," "profound and submissive respect," "adoration," "obedience." Thus, we worship God when our hearts are directed toward Him with reverence and adoration and when those attitudes are being expressed through our actions. This is the very point God was making in Lev. 10:3, when He said, "By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified." Nadab and Abihu, two sons of Aaron, failed to show God such honor because they did not worship Him the way He commanded. If we truly honor God and regard Him as Holy, then we will seek to do all things according to His will. As we consider the subject of worship, let this be our goal.

### In Truth

True worship is worship that is offered in the way it was meant to be—the way God wants to be worshipped. Jesus says that God's word is truth (John 17:17), so how we worship Him must be according to the instructions found in His word. In the Old Testament, worship was offered at the temple in Jerusalem where animals were offered to God by priests. The point that Jesus makes in John 4:23-24 is that, though the temple worship was acceptable for its time, there is another, better way that God desires to be worshipped. That form of worship will not require the use of a physical temple or sacrificial animals.

As we read through the rest of the New Testament, we learn that worshippers no longer required a temple because those who have been purified by the blood of Christ are the temple of God! See 1 Cor. 3:16. That means that wherever God's people are assembled together in worship to Him, He is there with them, much in the same way that His presence was in the Old Testament temple.

But we must remember that the only way God's presence can be with those who worship Him is if their worship is according to truth, for only then will it glorify Him. Therefore, God shows us what that worship must look like in the New Testament Scriptures:

## Questions

11. What five things can Christians do to worship God today?

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12. How do we give? \_\_\_\_\_

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13. Why do we eat the Lord's Supper? \_\_\_\_\_

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14. Why must we seek to worship God in Spirit? \_\_\_\_\_

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15. What if we worship Him outwardly, but our hearts are not right? \_\_\_\_\_

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16. How do we make our hearts ready to worship God? (2 things)

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17. With what two things should we seek to glorify God? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Discussion Question:** Discuss the dangers of adding to God's worship. Where many people at outside factors to make their worship more "spiritual" how should true worshippers make their worship more spiritual?

1. Singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, making melody in your hearts to the Lord (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:26). We can sing by ourselves, but we are also commanded to sing to one another.
2. We worship God in prayer. In our prayers we praise God and give thanks to Him (Col. 4:2). We also make our requests and supplications known to Him (Phil. 4:6). Such elements of our worship are called the "*fruit of our lips*" in Heb. 13:15.
3. Though Christians can worship God any day of the week, there are two elements of our worship that we can only do on the first day of the week. One of those is giving of what we have prospered (1 Cor. 16:1-2). This contribution is to be given by Christians who want to give and are glad to give to the Lord. "*For God loves a cheerful giver*" (2 Cor. 9:7). This is not a "tithe" as many religions practice. It is a "free will offering" that God only wants from those who want to give. "*Not of necessity.*"
4. The second element of our worship to be done on the first day is eating the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is included in our worship to fulfill two purposes. 1. It reminds us of the death of Christ (1 Cor. 11:25). 2. We proclaim the Lord's death (1 Cor. 11:26). In other words, we remember and proclaim the communion that we have with Christ through His body and His blood.
5. Finally, we also worship God when we devote ourselves to teaching and learning God's word. Such teaching is to be done for the edification (building up) of the church (1 Cor. 14:26; Eph. 4:11-12). When we devote ourselves to learning and doing God's word, we bring great honor to Him.

### **In Spirit**

When we worship God in truth we worship Him outwardly, but we must never forget that God is Spirit, not physical or fleshly. Why is that important to our worship? Because humans are both physical and spiritual beings. If we only worship God through physical actions (the act of worshipping Him), then our worship is incomplete. Physical motions without engaging our hearts is useless. Jesus refers to that kind of worship as "vain repetition" (Matt. 6:7).

Therefore, in order to worship God in Spirit AND in truth, we must first approach Him with the right kind of heart. The reason we can worship God at all is because Jesus purifies our hearts—He makes us holy and acceptable for service to God (1 Cor. 6:11, 19-20). But it is up to us to draw near to God with our hearts (James 4:8; Heb. 10:19-22). We must have awe and adoration, reverence and respect for Him as our God. We must approach Him while regarding Him as holy in our hearts: making melody in our hearts to the Lord (Eph. 5:19); giving ourselves to Him first (2 Cor. 8:5); as we learn, putting His law into our hearts (Heb. 8:10).

### **Conclusion**

Now that we understand these things, let us consider ourselves when we approach God so that we come before with right hearts. Let us take heed to our worship so that we do not add human devises and thereby dishonor God. When we do this, then we will be worshipping God in Spirit and in truth; we will "*glorify Him in our bodies and in our spirits, which are God's*" (1 Cor. 6:20).



# Lesson Eight

## Good and Evil

### Questions

1. *Ultimately, who are the leaders in the struggle between good and evil?* \_\_\_\_\_
2. *On whose side must a person be in order to be saved?* \_\_\_\_\_
3. *What is the standard that determines good from evil for the Christian?* \_\_\_\_\_
4. *According to Heb. 5:14, what are Christians expected to do?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. *How does evil disguise itself?* \_\_\_\_\_
6. *Why do many people have difficulty seeing through evil's disguise?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. *How can we overcome that difficulty?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. *When someone feels that they are "good enough," how does that person usually respond to correction?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. *How can we avoid that attitude?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Discussion Question:** *Discuss some evil things in our culture that are often presented as being good.*

*Discuss the kind of attitude one must have toward evil and, in contrast, the attitude one must have toward good.*

The struggle between good and evil has been going on since before the fall of man. Throughout the Scriptures we see God working for good while Satan is working for evil. The reason Jesus died on the cross was to destroy the works of Satan, which are evil (1 John 3:8). In the world, this struggle is largely a matter of personal opinion. The standards for good and evil often change from culture to culture, and even from person to person. But those who put on Christ acknowledge that God is the One who draws the unchangeable line between good and evil. It is a line that every person must acknowledge who desires salvation through Christ.

### The Need for Discernment

True Christians acknowledge that God is the standard for good. But it takes time and effort to learn what God says is good and what He says is evil. In Heb. 5:14, it says that mature Christians are those who have their "*senses exercised to discern good and evil.*" Why is exercise necessary to discern? Many times evil can be disguised as good, making it difficult for some people to recognize it for what it really is (2 Cor. 11:14). Also, while living in the world we become used to evil things so that, in our minds, they do not appear evil. When one comes out of the world through Christ there is residual, worldly thinking that must be overcome. "*This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that **you should no longer walk** as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them*" (Eph. 4:17-18). Our eyes need to be trained to tell the difference. We do this by growing in the knowledge of God's word. That is the point that Paul makes as He continues in Eph. 4:19-24.

At times, we are tempted to believe that we are "good enough." When this is our attitude, two things can happen: 1) We stop growing. Since we believe we are good enough we no longer have the motivation to learn more. This was part of the problem the Hebrew writer addressed in Heb. 5:12-13. 2) We become overconfident in our own senses. When this happens, we stop listening to the instruction and the advice of others. Our senses become weak because they are no longer being exercised. Rather than receiving correction from others, we are tempted to dismiss it as ignorant ranting from people to don't know as much as we do. But we cannot let this happen. The moment we stop exercising our senses we stop fighting for God in the struggle between good and evil. To avoid this, we must always remember to "examine ourselves" (2 Cor. 13:5).

### Emphasize the Difference

In Isa. 5:20, The Jews were rebuked because they were calling evil good and good evil. They failed to emphasize the difference between the two so that they gradually began to desire

## Questions

10. How must we strive to see things if we are to overcome evil? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. What is the approach many people take toward good and evil? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. Just because we no longer recognize something as evil, does that mean it is no longer evil? Explain. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. What is the common motivation for "walking the line"? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. What does the Bible teach us to do instead? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. What must we realize that will help motivate us to exercise our senses? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
16. List the weapons that we are to use in our warfare (Eph. 6:12ff): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
17. With what are we to overcome evil? \_\_\_\_\_
18. Why are we commanded to be vigilant according to 1 Pet. 5:8? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

evil things and abhor good things. This is what happens when we fail to emphasize the difference between good and evil.

We must learn from their mistake. In order to clearly see the line between good and evil, we must be devoted to God's word. We must strive to see things the way God sees them (Jer. 10:23; Isa. 55:8). And most importantly, we must be zealous to flee the things that are evil (consider 2 Cor. 7:11; 1 Tim. 6:11).

The way of the ungodly is to walk as close to the line between good and evil as they can. Many try to be good enough rather than all good. The problem with this approach is that while we are focused on getting away with as much as possible, we are ignoring God's word. What happens when we ignore God's word? Our sense become dull and we fail to recognize evil as well as we should. Eventually one's conscience becomes hardened so that while they are walking the line, they are in fact moving toward evil.

Therefore, rather than trying to get away with as much as possible, God's people must boldly rebuke evil and rejoice in that which is good. We are commanded in the Scriptures to FLEE sinful things (1 Cor. 10:14; 1 Tim. 6:11) to abstain from every APPEARANCE of evil (1 Thess. 5:22), and to CAST OFF everything that might entangle us in sin (Heb. 12:1).

### **Overcome Evil With Good**

To help motivate us to exercise our senses, we must realize that we are at war with evil. While many behave as if they are at a picnic where they mingle with the works of the devil (over look them, sweep them under the rug, brush them off as not being that bad), God's people are commanded to "*wage a good warfare, having faith and a good conscience...*" (1 Tim. 1:18-19; cf 1 Pet. 2:11). We do not fight physical battles with physical weapons, rather our battle is spiritual and our weapons are spiritual (Eph. 6:12-20). Therefore, when it comes to discerning between good and evil, we need to be on our guards as soldiers in the thick of the battle. We need to be watchful and vigilant against all forms of evil, which at times may be disguised as things that are good.

Since this spiritual warfare is not fought through physical might, we are commanded, "*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good*" (Rom. 12:21). In other words, the goodness of God is our weapon. If we want to be victorious then we must be devoted to training with our weapon. When we dabble in things which are evil then we are setting aside what is good; we are laying down our weapons and giving up the fight.

Let us therefore overcome evil by speaking the truth always (1 Pet. 4:11; Col. 4:6), by having our minds set on good things (Phil. 4:8), letting our lights shine in the world by doing good works (Matt. 5:16), and by fleeing and correcting sinful things (2 Cor. 10:3-5; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). We must be vigilant (1 Pet. 5:8)

### **Conclusion**

If we are on the Lord's side, then let us clearly emphasize the difference between good and evil. Let us flee evil with all of our might, and let us equally pursue the goodness of God (2 Tim. 2:19-26).

# Lesson Nine

## Overcoming Sin

### Questions

1. *When did sin enter the world?*  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. *Can a man save himself from his sins?* \_\_\_\_\_
3. *Is there a way to be saved from our sins? What is it?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. *In order to have that salvation, dose God have any expectation of us? What are they?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. *What is sin?* \_\_\_\_\_
6. *Why is it important to know God's word if we want to overcome sin?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. *What are the three ways men are enticed by sin?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. *What makes sin so enticing?* \_\_\_\_\_

**Discussion Question:** Discuss several examples of sin that feel good, but actually do more harm than good.

Sin is a problem that men have struggled with since Adam and Eve, but no man has the power to undo the terrible effects sin has on his relationship with God. Therefore, God, because of His great love, sent His Son to die on the cross in order to break the grip that sin has on men for those are willing to come to Him.

While we can be made free from the condemnation of sin through Jesus, there is still the problem of overcoming the draw of sin which continues to tug at our flesh. But, as Paul confidently said, "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*" (Phil. 4:13). Christ indeed strengthens us. He does not do it for us, but He gives us the means to be able to overcome sin (Gal. 5:24).

### About Sin

We learned in Lesson Eight that Satan is an enemy and that he is seeking to devour God's people. He does so by striving to draw us away from God through sin. But as Paul said in 2 Cor. 2:11, "*we are not ignorant of his devices.*" God teaches us about the cause and the nature of sin.

First and foremost, sin is the transgression of God's law. 1 John 3:4, "*Sin is lawlessness*" (NASB); "*Sin is the transgression of the law*" (KJV). The commands of God are meant to teach man how to walk in God's righteousness. Therefore, when we disobey God's commands we are walking, not in righteousness, but in wickedness. Sin is anything that is contrary to the character of God. That is why that it is so important for us to know what God's word says. Ps. 119:11 – "*Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.*"

Why would any person want to transgress God's law? James 1:14-15 – "*But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.*"

Sin entices us when our physical senses tell us that we want it. Sometimes we are actually convinced that we need it. That was what happened when Satan tempted Eve in Gen. 3:6. God had given Adam and Eve the command not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But Satan deceived Eve by convincing her that it was to her benefit to eat. So then, Eve ate the fruit because she saw "*that it was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise*" (vs. 6).

Can you spot the three kinds of desires that motivated Eve to sin? Food—lust of the flesh. Eyes—lust of the eyes. Wise—pride. These are the three basic senses that Satan uses to entice men to sin. This holds true for all men. 1 John 2:16 – "*For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world.*"

Sin is evil, but it does not always look evil. It entices the senses to make us think it is good because it *feels* good. But in order to overcome sin we must be willing to overlook the immediate feeling of pleasure in order to acknowledge the terrible consequences that follow. Moses understood this, for he chose "*to suffer affliction with*

## Questions

9. What was Moses willing to do? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. How permanent are the pleasures of sin? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. How does knowledge help us overcome sin? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. Why is confession so important? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. More often than not, what prevents people from confessing their sins? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. What good is confession without repentance? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
15. What is repentance? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
16. Why does one need determination in order to overcome sin? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
17. What must we be willing to bear if we want to follow Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Discussion Question:** Discuss some of the excuses people give for not overcoming their sins.

Discuss what it means to bear one's cross.

the people of God [rather] that to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin" (Heb. 11:25). Therefore, as we strive to understand the true nature of sin, let us continually acknowledge this universal truth, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Gal. 6:7-8).

### Essentials For Overcoming Sin

Now that we understand the wickedness and deceptive nature of sin, let us consider several essential spiritual tools that will help us to overcome our sins.

**Knowledge:** People in the world live in sin, in part, because they are ignorant of God (Eph. 4:18). Therefore, if we wish to overcome sin we must be willing to learn about God—to know who He is. But knowing God is not enough. We must also be able to recognize sin. We must be willing and able to see it for what it is; to "discern between good and evil" (Heb. 5:14). We cannot overcome what we do not know. Therefore, God desires that "all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4).

**Confession:** Knowing is not enough to overcome sin, for problems to do solve themselves. They have to be brought to light and addressed in an appropriate way. Our sins can be brought to light at the judgment (1 Cor. 4:5), or by our confessing them (James 5:16). Pride prevents us from admitting to others that we were wrong. Pride prevents us from exposing our own faults because we don't want to look bad. But pride, in itself, is sin (1 Tim. 3:6; 1 John 2:16). If we wait till the judgment, then we will reap the consequences of our sins. But if we cast off our pride and confess our sins now, we will be forgiven (1 John 1:9; Ps. 32:5). If we sin publically, we must confess publically. If we sin privately, then we must confess to God. If we need to be held accountable in order to overcome our sins, then we must confide in our brethren and confess our sins one to another.

**Repentance:** Repentance is a turning around; a changing of the heart. Some people today are of the opinion that confession without repentance is good enough. But our goal is to cast off sin (Rom. 13:12). The only way to do that is to turn our hearts away from sin and its enticements. Thus, we must allow the knowledge of God's word transform and renew our hearts; to cease loving sin and start loving the Lord (Rom. 12:2; Ezek. 18:31).

**Determination:** Sin does not give up easily. It is always waiting to ensnare us (Gen. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8; 1 Cor. 10:12). When a person repents, it is often followed by a sense of relief, but the temptation does not simply stop. Therefore, there must also be the determination to resist it. One must be committed to it. The Corinthians had this kind of response according to 2 Cor. 5:11, "For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter" (2 Cor. 7:11).

### Conclusion

Jesus said that if we desire to follow Him we must be willing to bear our cross (Luke 9:23). There is no comfortable cross. Overcoming sin is a difficult prospect, but it is possible through the sacrifice of Jesus and the knowledge of Him. Let us therefore have the resolve to turn our hearts to Him and to cast off our sins that we may be pleasing to our Lord.

# Lesson Ten

## Putting on Christ

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### Questions

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1. Is God only concerned with removing our sins? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. What does it mean to put on Christ? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. God is working in us when we put on Christ in baptism. But does that mean there is nothing else for us to do? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Where should we begin as we strive to put on Christ? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What does the life Christ lived teach us about the kind of attitude He had? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. How different is the mind of Christ compared to how we are used to thinking about things? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Given this difference, is it going to be easy for us to put on the mind of Christ? Explain. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Is it impossible? \_\_\_\_\_
9. What is the only thing that will prevent us? \_\_\_\_\_
10. According to Rom. 12:2, by what are we to be transformed? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. According to Ezek. 18:31, what are we to get? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

In the previous two lessons we discussed the war that we wage against sin as well as how we can overcome sin. But overcoming sin is only half of that battle. According to Rom. 6:18, 22, when we are freed from sin we become servants of God. So that in overcome sin, we are to serve righteousness by living like Christ. Thus Paul wrote in Gal. 3:27 that when we obey the gospel we put on Christ.

We put on Christ when we join Him in the likeness of His death (Rom. 6:3-4). We put on the life which He offers us, which we have through His death and His resurrection (Rom. 5:10). We put on His name as we become His followers (Matt. 28:19; Acts 11:26). As He is the Son of God, through Him we are made children of God (Gal. 3:26-27; 1 John 3:1).

All of this is done by God when we obey the gospel. Yet, there remains one thing that is necessary for putting on Christ. *"It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master"* (Matt. 10:25).

### Putting on the Mind of Christ

As we strive to put on Christ, the first place to begin is to put on the same mind or attitude that He had. *"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus..."* (Phil. 2:5).

Think about the kind of mind Jesus had to have in order to let go of His heavenly dwelling place and become a man (Phil. 2:6ff.). Think of what it must have taken to suffer the ridicule and the constant threat posed by the Jews (Mat. 11:18). What values had Jesus set up in His heart to be willing to suffer the agony of the cross? *"...who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God"* (Heb. 12:2).

As we think about these things we begin to realize that the mind of Jesus is very different from that of most people; it is very different from our own - His values, His righteousness, His love, His humility. And yet, that is what we are told to put on. One quickly realizes that this is no easy task and that some serious changes need to be made in our own hearts if we are going to succeed. There is no doubt that we can succeed (Phil. 4:13), otherwise God would not have commanded it. Therefore, the question is, are we willing? Is heaven worth it for us to make those changes?

In light of this, consider Rom. 12:2, *"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..."* Consider also Ezek. 18:31, *"Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit."* The new heart that we are to learn is Christ's, which has been revealed to us in the Scriptures (1 Cor. 2:16). Therefore, Jesus said, *"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls"* (Matt. 11:29).

## Questions

12. What characteristics are we to learn in Gal. 5:22-23? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

13. What characteristics are we to learn in 2 Pet. 1:5-7? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

14. If we have put on the mind of Christ, what will naturally follow? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

15. For what are we created in Christ Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_

16. Going to church is essential for Christian life, but is it enough?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

17. What else is needed? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

18. Do we need to spend great amounts of time and money serving in charitable organizations to do good works?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

19. Give some examples of the kinds of good works God praises? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

20. How are good works a way of life? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Discussion Question:** Discuss how Christ took every opportunity to do good and how we can mimic His example today.

As you strive for this goal, consider the multitude of passages in the New Testament that talk about spiritual attitudes and characteristics. Think about the words that are used in passages such as Gal. 5:22-23 and 2 Pet. 1:5-7 and how those words reflect the character of Christ. Seek to understand the meaning of those words and how to apply them in your life.

### Putting on the Works of Christ

The works that a person does is a direct result of what is in his heart (Luke 6:45). Such was the case with Jesus; the works that He did reflected His love for God and for mankind. Likewise, if we have put on the mind of Christ, that mind will be manifest through the works that we do.

Jesus died so that as we overcome sin we can fill our lives with the good works of God. As Jesus said of Himself, “*I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day*”, we must take this same approach to our lives. As Paul put it in Eph. 2:10, “*For we are His workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works**, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*”

Many Christians limit the works that they do to the services of the local church. In reality, the worship that we offer up to God in the assembly, though essential and beneficial, only represents a small portion of the works that we are to be doing.

Another misconception is that the works of God require great amounts of time, money and other resources. In fact, the opposite is truth. What we need to do is set aside the world’s idea of good works and learn the works that God intended for us to do.

In Matt. 9:41 Jesus praised something as simple as giving one of His servants a cup of water to drink. In Luke 11:38-42 we read a story about Mary and Martha and how Martha was very busy serving and taking care of her guests, while Mary was sitting and learning at the feet of Jesus. But Jesus praised Mary and corrected Martha, because Mary understood the value of learning spiritual truths. Throughout the Scriptures, small deeds which require little more than time to help one’s neighbor are what Christians are taught to do. In James 1:27 we are taught that true and undefiled religion consists of encouraging and helping those who have true needs.

What we are taught is that our good works are not to consist of grand schemes that require hours upon hours of effort that ultimately glorify men. Rather, good works describe our way of life—our day to day behavior. They describe the kind of conversations we engage in (Col. 4:6), helping someone who has need as we walk along the way (Luke 10:30-37), or taking the time to lift someone’s burden.

Thus, rather than sending small fortunes to charitable organization, let us learn to open our eyes and our hearts to the needs of our brethren and our neighbors. Rather than filling our lives with mundane tasks, let us leave room for prayer, study, helping others, and having conversations with those who need the gospel. Let us have the kind of mind that looks for every opportunity to do good. Thus, our lights will shine, for we will have truly put on Christ.

Have you put on Christ? Now is the time. Do not delay.