

# SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

VOLUME 44

*"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39).*



NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DISTRICT \_\_\_\_\_

REGION/GROUP \_\_\_\_\_

STATE \_\_\_\_\_

**A Publication Of  
Deeper Christian Life Ministry  
P.O. Box 59, University of Lagos P.O.  
Akoka, Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria  
© 2011**

# CONTENTS

<u>LESSON</u>		<u>PAGE</u>
<b><u>OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES</u></b>		
560	- ISRAEL SUFFERS DEFEAT AT AI	4
561	- JOSHUA CONQUERS AI	13
562	- JOSHUA BUILDS AN ALTAR ON MOUNT EBAL	20
563	- DECEIT OF GIBEONITES	26
564	- ISRAEL'S VICTORY OVER THE AMORITES	34
<b><u>NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES</u></b>		
565	- BELIEVERS' SPIRITUAL LIFE	39
566	- THE TRIUMPH OF BELIEVERS IN CHRIST	46
567	- TRUE CHILDREN OF GOD	53
568	- ADOPTION OF THE GENTILES	60
569	- RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH	67
<b><u>SPECIAL STUDIES</u></b>		
570	- REPENTANCE	75
571	- THE NEW BIRTH	80
572	- FELLOWSHIP AMONG THE BRETHREN	87

# BEGINNING OF OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

## 560 Lesson

### ISRAEL SUFFERS DEFEAT AT AI

**MEMORY VERSE:** "Israel hath cast off the thing that is good: the enemy shall pursue him" (Hosea 8:3).

**TEXT:** Joshua 7: 1-26

**T**his lesson demonstrates the bitter consequences of sin and how it can destroy great potentials. The Lord had promised Joshua, "**Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you...**" (Joshua 1:3). Accordingly, Israel gained victory over Jericho in their first major campaign for Canaan as seen in the preceding chapter. Truly, it was a demonstration of God's faithfulness to His promise. "**So the LORD was with Joshua; and his fame was noised throughout all the country**" (Joshua 6:27). Israel's prospect was bright and they were poised to continue their victory march to the next target city, Ai. Unknown to Joshua and his commanders, sin had caused a breach in Israel's relationship with God. Like Samson, they "**wist not that the LORD was departed from**" (Judges 16:20) their midst.

Israel's experience at Ai is a clear warning to believers. In every period in the history of humanity, we may experience victory or success. While celebrating success, we must at the same time watch and resist the temptation to feel complacent. We need to celebrate our victory with humility; otherwise, the sin of pride and spiritual complacency can cause a surprising defeat.

**Question 1:** What lesson do we learn from Israel's conquest of the "straightly shut up" Jericho and their defeat by a "few" at Ai?

**THE CONTAGION AND CORROSION OF SIN** (Joshua 7: 1; 6:18; Proverbs 15:27; Hebrews 12:15; Romans 5:15,19; Hebrews 2:14,15)

**"But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi... took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel"** (Joshua 7: 1).

Israel's history shows that sin, unless repented of and forsaken, will bring God's displeasure. God's attribute of justice demands that He will by no means clear the guilty who does not take advantage of His provision for remission of sins. Past events such as the golden calf at Sinai (Exodus 32:1-10), the rebellion at Kadesh-barnea (Numbers 13-14) and the idolatry and fornication at Peor (Numbers 25) should not have been forgotten so soon by any Israelite. The expression of our text attributes the sin of Achan to the entire congregation of Israel, though no person outside Achan's family may have been privy to it. In taking to himself the accursed thing, Achan flagrantly disobeyed the commandment of God. **"And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it"** (Joshua 6: 18). The consequence of Achan's sin affected the people. Just as in some cases the good deed of one man may benefit many, so also the sin of one man may bring evil upon many. This truth has a three-fold implication. First, it should concern us to watch over our lives, not only in our own interest but also in the interest of our family, loved ones and our church. Second, we should be concerned about the lives of those who share membership with us in our families, the church, community or business. Third, preaching the gospel to sinners and turning them to saints does not only please the Lord, it strengthens our security and promotes our joy as members of the same family, church or community.

**Question 2: Mention other instances in the Bible when the consequence of one man's sin affected many.**

Sin is a scourge both to the sinner and those who relate in any way with the sinner. **"He that is greedy of gain troubles his own house"** (Proverbs 15:27). Israel was afflicted because king David was moved by Satan to number

the people (1 Chronicles 21: 11); the mariners suffered from a, great storm and the loss of their cargo because of Jonah's rebellion (Jonah 1); Hamor, Shechem and the people of their city were destroyed as a result of Shechem's fornication with Dinah (Genesis 34). As Christians we should be careful at all times, **"looking diligently... lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble [us], and thereby many be defiled"** (Hebrews 12; 15). On the positive side, the holy zeal of Phinehas stayed the plague of God's wrath against Israel's idolatry and fornication at Peor (Numbers 25); Rahab's faith in Israel's God saved her and her entire household. Apostle Paul's prayer and faith saved the two hundred and seventy-six men that were with him in a shipwreck (Acts 27:21-44). Above all, our Lord Jesus Christ came to the world in the likeness of our sinful flesh, identified with humanity so that His vicarious death, righteousness and victory over sin and Satan may be imputed for the benefit of all who believe in Him. **"But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many"** (Romans 5: 15). As man lost his God-given dominion by the disobedience of our first parents, so did Christ by His representative obedience and sacrifice restore us to God's favor and forgiveness. Now, He inputs His righteousness to all who believe Him (Romans 5: 19).

**CONSEQUENCE OF COMPLACENCY AND PRESUMPTION** (Joshua 7:3; 1 Samuel 23:1-5, 10-12,30:8; Philippians 2:3. Numbers 23:21; Deuteronomy 32:30) ,

**"And they returned to Joshua, and said unto him, Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labor thither; for they are' but few"** (Joshua 7.3).

Israel's experience at Ai highlights one of the most common pitfalls which every believer should watch against namely, presuming that divine approval obtained for one situation may, without further prayer, be assumed valid for another in a seemingly similar situation. David in his

flight from the sword of king Saul, the Philistines and the Amalekites, found security in his consistent enquiry from the Lord whether to stay or flee from a place, whether or not to attack or pursue his enemies, (1 Samuel 23:1-5,10-12; 30:8). In the case of Israel at Ai, they presumed that God's presence was with them merely on the basis of their Jericho experience. We cannot safely measure our relationship with God only on the basis of our past victory or success without regard to our present walk with Him. Had Israel sincerely sought God's face and allowed His Spirit to influence the formulation of the attack strategy as was the case with Jericho, the Lord would have uncovered the sin of Achan before the battle, and the loss and defeat would have been averted. The lesson here is that whenever we contemplate a new step, a new direction or project we should pray and observe the indications of God's will. This spiritual principle applies to personal, family, church or business matters. Constant Christian victory lies in **"forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before"** under the will and guidance of God (Philippians 2.13).

**Question 3: Why do some people fail to find out God's will in choosing a course of action, and what is the danger?**

**"And Joshua said, Alas, O Lord GOD, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan!"** (Joshua 7:7).

The unexpected defeat inflicted upon Israel by the men of Ai was the consequence of God's abandonment of Israel as a result of sin in the camp. Before Ai, Joshua ruled out the possibility of Israel's defeat unless God had forsaken them. He had often recalled the promise of God's presence which he received at his commission to lead Israel into Canaan; hence he was utterly distressed at their sudden downfall. The defeat should have made him to know that God has beheld iniquity in Jacob and seen perversion in Israel (Numbers 23:21). Therefore, the Lord his God was no longer with them. **"How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold**

**them and the LORD had shut them up?"** (Deuteronomy 32:30). Some reflections would have indicated to Joshua that something was amiss, and that the fault could not be with God. God never abandons us until we abandon Him.

Joshua continued: **"O Lord, what shall I say. When Israel turneth their backs before their enemies"** (verse 8).

Joshua's lamentations should have been more inward-looking since God knows why He allows some adversities into our lives, though we may not know. However, we can always be rest assured that the Lord will never do us wrong. When, therefore, we experience what may seem as evidence that God is displeased with us, we should never complain or murmur against the Lord as though He has done us wrong but pray to Him as the One Who can furnish the key to the door of our relief or deliverance.

The exposure of Achan's transgression is a reminder to all sinners that **"God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil"** (Ecclesiastes 12:14). '

The sin of Achan, as the sins of all men, is the result of disobedience to the word of God. The knowledge of and reverence for HIS word are the only panaceas for sin. The word of God not only informs the heart, it also transforms and imparts strength to our character to enable us resist temptations. Unfortunately, the teaching and application of the word are not given their deserved prominence in some assemblies.

**Question 4: Why are many church-goers vulnerable to temptations and what is the solution to this problem?**

The psalmist wrote in Psalm 119: 11: **"Thy word have hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee". And again, "I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word"** (Psalm 119:15,16). It is lack of knowledge of divine precepts and forgetfulness of same that predispose many to failure in the hour of temptation.



Our Lord Jesus Christ, in expounding the prophecy concerning His resurrection to two of His disciples on their way to Emmaus, did not rely on only one verse of scripture. He began "**at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself**" (Luke 24:27).

Achan, no doubt knew about the divine order that the spoils of Jericho were to be devoted to the Lord and not to be appropriated by anyone (Joshua 6: 18). However, he ignored the command and presumptuously slid downward on the path of sin. His action confirmed James' revelation of stages in sinning. "**But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death**" (James 1:14,15) True, Achan probably could not help seeing "**the goodly Babylonish garment**" in the course of the siege of Jericho, but he came to where those items were. His first downward step however was taken when he looked at them a second time and imagined in his heart what it would be like to own all that treasure.

It is always that second look that sets the imagination working and leads to the commission of sin. His thought dwelt on the supposed gain or pleasure as to feed the growing enticement of sin, until his weak spiritual restraint gave way. If Achan had heeded the scripture and kept the word of God as a frontlet between his eyes, it would have protected him from thinking or looking in the direction that led to sin (Deuteronomy 11:18; Proverbs 4:20-25).

Achan's second downward step was in thinking of those items as "**spoils**" of war, whereas God had called them "**accursed things**". It will help in our fight against temptation if we call the objects of temptation the same names God calls them, and look at them from the divine perspective. If, in His word, God says that something is wrong whatever It may be, then it is wrong and there is no latitude for debate.

Achan's third mistake lay in his thinking that he could cover up his sin by running away or hiding the stolen items.

As a songwriter put it, "You may cover your sin so *that* no one else *may know*; you cannot hide it from God". Achan forgot the scripture that warns: "**...and be sure your sin will find you out**" (Numbers 32:23). Achan would have known that "**...all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do**" (Hebrews 4:13)

**Question 5: Mention three downward steps that led Achan to the commission of sin. What could have prevented each step?**

**CONFESSION AND PURGING OF SIN** (Joshua 7:20-23; 1 Samuel 13:11,12; 15:9,21-24; Deuteronomy 8:15; Hosea 2:9; Hebrews 13:11-13)

**"And Achan' answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus have I done"** (verse 20).

The confession made by Achan was a belated acknowledgement of sin. However, he owned up and did not fetch himself any excuse or try to put the blame at another person's door. An impenitent confessor will keep back some unfavorable truths, but an awakened conscience will reveal more than a thousand witnesses. Achan gave specific details of his sin saying, "**thus and thus have I done**"; he revealed every step that culminated in the sinful act. He did not attempt to clothe his sin in extenuating colours even in the confession of it. This was unlike Saul when he sinned by intruding presumptuously into the priestly role of offering a burnt offering (1 Samuel 13: 11,12). Achan did not claim an unverifiable and groundless intention to save the things stolen for the purpose of sacrificing them unto the Lord as did Saul (1 Samuel 15:9, 21-24). In adding that he had "**sinned against the LORD God of Israel**", Achan gave expression to his deepest regret that, as an Israelite himself, he had offended his own God. How could he, a soldier of that God-exalted nation descend into such a shameful moral pit at which even the godless Canaanites would blush? A true soldier in Israel's army cannot forget the Lord "**who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and**

**drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint ...”** (Deuteronomy 8: 15). Any so- called believer who wilfully commits sin today is even guiltier of sinful ingratitude than Achan.

On the other hand, it is astonishing that at no time during the long process leading up to Achan's revelation as the culprit, did the pang of conscience compel him to confess his sin. Confession should not be extorted by whack or force from sinners. One can imagine the growing fear and torment that must have gripped Achan and his family while the process of searching out the culprit closed in upon them and their shame when at last they were discovered to the public. An early confession and repentance could have mitigated their pang of conscience.

**Question 6: Why should the sinner confess his deeds to God before it is too late?**

Satan always hides the shameful and inglorious end of sin from the sinner until it is too late. The abiding truth however is that sinners will always be the loser in the end. God will recover whatever is stolen from him, one way or the other (Hosea 2:9; Proverbs 28: 13)

**“And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? The LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones”** (Joshua 7:25). Achan was thus finally discovered and exterminated from the camp. As the scripture declares, **“the wages of sin is death”**. Consequently, the peace, presence of God and victory returned to the camp of Israel.

Sin by separating men from God, Joins them to diversities of troubles. When our Lord Jesus Christ became a sin offering for our sakes, He was taken outside the gate (separated) (Hebrew 13: 12). This shows that sin, which was the reason Christ suffered humiliation, pain and death for mankind, causes not only a plague and trouble but also forfeitures of all privileges, rights and comforts.

The end of sin is death and eternal separation from God. As a Christian writer put it: *“do it as due to a sinner when*

*he hath sinned as wages are to a servant when he hath done his work". This is true of every sin, and because all have sinned at one time or another, all are under the sentence of death, deserving only death as wages. Eternal life in contrast is a gift not deserved from a loving God to all who believe in His only begotten Son. Another Christian writer has this to say: "There is no proportion between glory in heaven and our obedience to God. We must thank God not ourselves when we get to heaven.. It is Christ that purchased it, prepare it. It is Christ that prepared us for it"*

## DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	1TIMOTHY	6	Ezekiel	3-4
TUE	2 Timothy	1-2	“	5-6
WED	“	3-4	“	7-8
THUR	Titus	1-3	“	9-10
FRI	Philemon	1	“	11-12
SAT	Hebrews	1-3	“	13-14
SUN	“	4-5	“	15-16

# 561 Lesson

## JOSHUA CONQUERS AI

**MEMORY VERSE:** "And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear not, neither be thou dismayed: take all the people of war with thee, and arise. Go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land" (Joshua 8: 1).

### **TEXT: Joshua 8: 1-29**

In the preceding chapter, Ai had temporarily punctured Israel's testimony of continuous victory when they killed about thirty six Israeli soldiers in battle. As a result, Joshua went back to the Lord to find out what was the possible cause of their defeat in the hand of an army of a small country like Ai when they had completely and without resistance, overrun Jericho, a much greater country. As a matter of fact, Israel had, because of their victory over Jericho, relapse into self-management, lethargy and sin. One of the soldiers had contravened a divine instruction which forbade them from touching or taking items which belonged to the inhabitants of Jericho. Achan had, through his defilement and sin, brought national defeat to Israel and needed to be dealt with.

Through Joshua's supplication, intercession and confession of sins, God's glory came back into the camp. Israel, having taken care of the sin that had constituted a hindrance and reproach to them, was now in a position to totally rout Ai and make them a nation to be feared and respected abroad. The strategy God revealed to Joshua was meant to be transmitted to the army, understudied and implemented by the soldiers implicitly. Though the strategy looked noticeably sketchy, it is clear that the leader of the army had been given the details as seen in his address to the army. This teaches that at all times, leaders of the Lord's army in the families, churches and nations must be open to God so as to get the needed strategies for overcoming the devil and his cohorts.

**Question 1: What assurance does the victory over Ai give believers?**

It is assuring to believers that Ai will not always prevail but that for every challenge, there is a divine strategy for victory. What believers should always do is to turn to the Lord for appropriate and relevant strategy at all times; and when the Lord reveals the strategy, they must, without hesitation, implement same for comprehensive victory.

**DIVINE STRATEGY FOR CONQUERING AI** (Joshua 8:1-8; 6:2-5; Exodus 15:3; Psalm 83:18; 2 Samuel 5:17-25)

God **"is a man of war: the LORD is his name."** So, He has strategies for overcoming seemingly great challenges. Such strategies, however, are often different from man's. Divine strategies may seem foolish or ordinary to the natural man but they are awesome and unfailing. In order to overrun the city, the strategy was for the Israeli army to simply lay ambush against the city of Ai. Laying ambush, to the natural man, has no prospect of victory over an army that had conquered Israel in a recent warfare. But God is not a man. He says, **"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts"** (Isaiah 55:8,9). God knows the peculiar battle every believer is facing, the enemy and how to defeat him. The understanding that God knows the solution to every problem should make every believer exercise absolute trust in Him and seek His face for intervention.

For the tactic to work out perfectly, the army of Israel were given the details of the ambush which entails the soldiers attacking Ai and then retreating as if they were being conquered, as had happened in the earlier battle. With this, Ai soldiers would pursue them thereby drawing out of the city while Israeli soldiers in ambush would come out and set the city on fire. This would weaken the enemy nation who would be torn between continuing to pursue Israeli soldiers or going back to put out the fire. The tactic was successful as many of the enemies were killed and their king and the city of Ai overthrown. Divine strategies never fail.

**Question 2: Describe other instances where Bible characters have had victory over their enemies through God-given strategies.**

Another example of victory over the enemy through a God-given tactic was the case of King David. Shortly after he was crowned king over the whole nation the Philistine came to battle with him. He sought God for the strategy to conquer them. Shortly after defeating them, they came again. Rather than asking him to use the immediate past tactic, God told him to employ another. The Philistines expected David to come against them the way he did before but God instructed him to adopt another strategy which not only made him unpredictable but also impregnable. This further shows that God cannot be predicted; He has a thousand ways of achieving a particular assignment.

God's people and their leaders should not always panic in seemingly difficult situations but ask God for strategies for surmounting their challenges. As Joshua did not embark on trial-and-error methods to conquer Ai but went to God, believers should always find out from Him what methods should be adopted in conquering the battles of life and ministry. Believers must not allow any situation or circumstance to so overwhelm them that they cannot seek the face of God for guidance.

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REVEALED STRATEGY** (Joshua 8:9-23; 2 Kings 4:1-7; Hebrews 6:11,12)

**Question 3: What do believers learn from Israel's prompt implementation of the divine strategy?**

It is not enough to pray for God's leading and guidance in whatever one does, the believer must learn to always go a step further: he must do all that the Lord has commanded. When the Lord gave Joshua and his army the strategy for victory over the enemy, they did not hesitate to implement it. Without wasting time, **"Joshua therefore sent them forth"**, and without questioning the efficacy of the strategy, the soldiers **"went to lie in ambush... And Joshua rose up early in the morning, and numbered the people, and went up, he and the elders of Israel, before the people**

**to Ai.”** The promptness in implementing the strategy indicates the trust Joshua and his army had in the Lord. There were no extraneous considerations. Such child like obedience to divine instruction is what God demands of all believers.

As soon as it was time to overrun the city, God instructed Joshua to lift up his spear. At the sight of this, the ambush nearest to the city made a sudden rush and took possession of the city, sending a message to their brethren-soldiers by raising a smoke from the walls. In the ensuing commotion, the army of Ai was completely crushed.

Believers need to always bear in mind that there are two sides to God's promises: the divine and the human. To have God's great promises fulfilled, the believer must ensure that he accomplishes the human side of the bargain. If the children of Israel had failed to go out to implement the revealed divine strategies, their march towards the Promised Land would have been truncated. God fulfills His promise but often to the extent that man is ready to fulfill his own responsibility. When Elisha instructed the widow to gather vessels, the oil stopped at the point they could not get more containers (2 Kings 4:6).

**Question 4: How important is implementation of divine strategies to the believer?**

Most times, God waits for believers to play their part to have His promises fulfilled. For instance, the slothful 'believer' cannot expect to have the promise of success fulfilled in his business. Wisdom teaches that efforts must be made to fulfill the human side of God's promises in order to receive the benefits.

**CONSEQUENCES OF FOLLOWING DIVINE STRATEGY**  
(Joshua 8:24-29; 6:20,21,24,27; Genesis 22: 15-18)

When God's work is done God's way and at the right time, there will always be a positive result. Thus, Ai was completely overrun "**when they were all fallen on the edge of the sword, until they were consumed, that all the Israelites returned unto Ai, and smote it with**



**the edge of the sword"** (Joshua 8:24). Twelve thousand people, comprising of women, children and old persons left behind in the city of Ai were all destroyed. For believers who are ready to play their parts, God will go to any length to have His promises fulfilled in their lives. Men, demons and Satan cannot hinder God from fulfilling His promises. As believers obey God's instructions, all strangers that had reigned over them will be cut off.

**Question 5: What lesson can believers learn in seeking the will of God from the experiences of Israel in chapters six and eight?**

Unlike what happened in Jericho where Israel "**utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword"** (Joshua 6:21), they were here permitted to take for spoil "**the cattle and the spoil of that city"** (Joshua 8:26). This further portrays that God's way is different from man's. This calls for the believer to turn to the Lord in every situation so as to know His mind about it. Believers should never take seeking the mind of God for granted.

**LESSONS FROM ISRAEL'S VICTORY OVER AI** (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11,12; 2 Corinthians 13:5 Ephesians 6,10-17)

**Question 6: What lessons can the believer learn from Israel's victory over Ai?**

In obtaining victory over Ai, Joshua humbled himself and sought to know the cause of their defeat in the hand of a seemingly little country rather than resort to blame-game. Every believer who has suffered defeat in one area or the other needs to do self-examination to ascertain the cause of defeat and seek to know and do the will of God. Second, there are several battles to be fought in life and each battle has its peculiar strategy for victory with God. Therefore, the believer must learn from God what strategy to employ in fighting the battles of life. Third, God addressed the issue of fear which is the weapon Satan uses to demobilize God's people. In spite of previous defeat,

God's command is, "Fear not, neither be thou dismayed... see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land" (Joshua 8: 1). Fear is negative faith that admits that the enemies' threats and words of discouragement are true and will be fulfilled. Jesus however calls the devil the father of all lies. Those who believe his lies continue to live in defeat. It is with faith that the believer is able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. God's reassuring word is, "**Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness**" (Isaiah 41-10).

Four, God did not promise any Christian a battle-free ride to heaven. "**For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places**" (Ephesians 6: 12). As long as we live, we will continue to fight against temptations, sin, Satan, his cohorts, the flesh, the world, false teachings, etc. Without battle, there cannot be victory. It is in view of the battles we will fight and the assurance of believers' victory that the Lord has prepared crowns and rewards for those who overcome. Those who are spiritually lazy careless, lethargic and weak need to urgently seek the help of God so as not to fall. Five, believers who have suffered the onslaught of the enemy should not give up as the victory of the enemy is temporary. David suffered such sudden attack of the enemy but he sought the face of the Lord and recovered all that were taken captive (1 Samuel 30:1-19). Believers must ensure that they are alert, spiritually strong, well-equipped and ready to fight every form of evil (Ephesians 6:10-17). This calls for him to "**be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might**" and to "**take unto [himself] the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand**" (Ephesians 6: 10,13).

## DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Hebrews	6-7	Ezekiel	17-18
TUE	“	8-9	“	19-20
WED	“	10	“	21
THUR	“	11	“	22
FRI	“	12-13	“	23
SAT	James	1-2	“	24-25
SUN	“	3-5	“	26-27

# 562 Lesson

## JOSHUA BUILDS AN ALTAR ON MOUNT EBAL

**MEMORY VERSE:** "Then Joshua built an altar unto the Lord God of Israel in mount Ebal" (Joshua 8:30)

### **TEXT: Joshua 8:30-35**

The event that forms the focus of our present study was preceded by the total destruction of Ai by the children of Israel under the leadership of Joshua. After that memorable conquest, Joshua erected an altar on mount Ebal in obedience to God's earlier command through Moses (Deuteronomy 27:2-8).

The building of an altar unto God at this time in the history of Israel was indicative of a covenant renewal and an acknowledgment of the Lord as the source of their victory. It was both a token of worship/thanksgiving on the one hand -and a display of the effects of obedience or disobedience, on the other. At first, Israel experienced failure in Ai, but after their repentance and purging, failure was turned to victory. So, they had cause to worship and thank God for their eventual victory; but at the same time, they needed to be reminded that whereas disobedience brings defeat and setbacks, obedience brings blessing. This was the primary lesson of the altar built on mount Ebal, as the children of Israel began the conquest of Canaan.

**Question 1: What is the significance of the altar built on mount Ebal and what lesson can believers learn from it?**

After the destruction of Jericho, the next city that Israel attacked was Ai, and both cities were in the central highlands of Canaan. By gaining control of this central part, Israel was able to cut off the North-South traffic, thereby having opportunity to conquer the South and North in separate campaigns. This is what made the conquest of Ai so significant for them. As believers,

whenever we experience special favor from the Lord, we should see such times as periods to renew our covenant with God and commit ourselves more to Him.

**THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN ALTAR FOR GOD** (Joshua 8:30,31; Deuteronomy 27:2-8; 11:29,30; Exodus 20:24,25)

**"Then Joshua built an altar unto the LORD God of Israel in mount Ebal... an altar of whole stones, over which no man hath lift: up any iron: and they offered thereon burnt offerings unto the LORD and sacrificed peace offerings"** (Joshua 8:30,31).

As soon as Israel overcame Ai, Joshua obeyed the Lord by building an altar on mount Ebal. God had earlier instructed on the location of mount Ebal against Gerizim. Ebal was on the northern side of Shechem while Gerizim was towards the South. Ebal's land was more barren while Gerizim was more beautiful and fertile. The children of Israel were to divide their tribes into two: six on Ebal and six on Gerizim. Then blessings were pronounced from Gerizim while curses were pronounced from Ebal.

After defeating Jericho, the children of Israel burnt the city and all that was in it, except the silver, gold, brass and iron which were devoted unto God (Joshua 6:24). So Jericho was like a first fruit of the conquest in Canaan and it was completely devoted to God. Ai, being the next conquered city, was only subdued after God had intervened by dealing with the breach caused by Achan's sin. Therefore, it was necessary at this time for Israel to show gratitude to God by building an altar unto the Lord.

It would be observed that there was no reference to sin-offerings or trespass-offerings on the altar of mount Ebal. The scripture only mentions burnt and peace offerings. Therefore, this altar and its sacrifices were expressive of thanksgiving, worship, communion and renewal of covenant between God and His people. It was the first altar to be built by the Israelites on Canaan land and it signified the commencement of a new life of obedience and faith in God. Though there were still many formidable enemies to be conquered, Israel built an altar to God as a token of

their faith that He who brought them safe thus far would lead them to conquer the entire land.

**Question 2: State the specific guidelines concerning the construction of God's altar and what they signify?**

Earlier in Exodus, God had given specific instructions regarding the raising of an altar to Him. God's altar must be built of whole stones no iron tool should be used upon it, and it must not be so high as to require steps for climbing (Exodus 20:25,26; Deuteronomy (27:4-8). These instructions were definitely in contrast with the prevailing idolatrous practices of the time. Whereas idol worshippers used iron tools, which was a recent innovation, to design various signs and shapes on the hewn stones of their altars, God would have His people separate and distinct from them. Our worship, either in style or approach, must be clearly different from that of the world. Believers must not attempt to use human ingenuity to alter God's definite instructions concerning His altar. We should ever remember that acceptable worship or service must be premised upon total conformity to all the revealed will of God.

**THE CENTRALITY OF GOD'S LAW IN TRUE WORSHIP**  
(Joshua 8:32,34,35; Deuteronomy 27:1-3,8; 31:11-13; Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:1-3; 119:11; Luke 4:16; John 5:39; Colossians 4: 16)

**"And he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel"** (Joshua 8:32).

The Lord commanded that the children of Israel should write the law on plastered stones besides the altar that was raised on mount Ebal. Then, as the people gathered to offer burnt offerings and peace offerings to God, Joshua read all the words of the law: the blessings and curses according to all that is written in the book of the law. This shows the centrality of the word of God whenever His people gather to worship Him.

**Question 3: What lesson can believers learn from the writing and reading of God's law in connection with the altar on mount Ebal?**

The pattern that God gave to Israel demanded that the law of God should occupy a central position both in their worship and entire life in the Promised Land. To worship God in a scriptural way, we must be obedient to His word and conform to the pattern He has laid down in all things. Joshua wrote the words of the law and also read it to all the people so that they would hear, learn and fear God. He did not leave out any portion but he read both the blessings and the curses. We must read -God's word and obey its commands just as we claim its promises.

At the church or family level, we must give the word of God the attention it deserves during our worship and devotional time. Whether among the children, youths, adults, new converts or old timers, the word of God should be the central focus. Our singing, pattern of prayer, praise-preaching, etc. must be in line with the word of God. All believers are enjoined to study, meditate and practice the word of God so that they can prosper and have good success. Like the Berean Christians, we should search the scriptures and use it as a standard of our faith and actions. The word of God should dwell richly in our hearts.

**CORPORATE WORSHIP AND CONCERN FOR THE ALIENS** (Joshua 8:33-35; Deuteronomy 31:11-13; Nehemiah 8:3; Hebrews 10:25)

All Israel participated at this solemn occasion of erecting an altar to God on mount Ebal. The elders, officers, judges, women, the little ones and strangers who were assimilated into the nation were all in attendance and participated actively in the covenant renewal ceremony. This showed that in Israel, everyone took corporate worship of God seriously. No one was left out; not even the strangers could exempt themselves from corporate worship. From the example of Israel, we learn that our regular and special programs should be embraced by all members of the church. Those who are in the habit of absenting themselves from corporate worship are not doing well and

God is not pleased with them. The word of God enjoins us not to forsake **"the assembly 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). We should not only be punctual at fellowship meetings, we should also show concern for our unsaved neighbors by inviting them to church so that they can hear the word of God and get saved.

**Question 4: What is the significance of the ark of the Lord being placed in the center of the congregation on this occasion?**

As the Israelites gathered on mount Ebal, it would be observed that the Ark of the Covenant was placed in the centre of the assembly. This was a symbol of the presence of God among His people. Their gathering was not around any idol but around the Ark containing the law. Again, their gathering was not for any physical jamboree as it is done in many worship places today. Whenever we gather for worship as believers, God is in our midst to bless and answer our prayers. Jesus said, **"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"** (Matthew 18:20). There is great power and blessing in corporate worship because of the presence of God among His people. Therefore, we should not trivialize or regard regular gathering of God's people for worship as mere routine. We should reawaken our first love for the presence of God in our lives. Similarly, we must rediscover our lost zeal for evangelism. The good old habit of bringing visitors, friends and acquaintances to church programs should be renewed.

**Question 5: Why is patience a necessary virtue in order to worship God in truth and in spirit?**

It is also very commendable that the children of Israel patiently waited while Joshua raised the altar **"and afterward he read all the words of the law the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law"**. (Joshua 8:34). Worshipping God in spirit and truth requires patience and concentration. Those who come to God's presence but, at the same time, are in a



hurry to rush out cannot really worship. Unnecessary haste to leave fellowship meetings will definitely rob worshippers of essential blessings from the Lord. We must learn to wait upon God and allow Him to have His way in our lives. Though we should avoid needless waste of time during fellowship meetings, we must also avoid the other extreme where we rush over "important details of worship and devotion to God. Joshua was faithful in teaching all the words of the law. He did not diminish or add to what Moses handed over to him. The patience of the people paved the way for the faithfulness of Joshua. As we wait patiently before the Lord, His ministers will have the opportunity to speak and teach all that He has commanded them to give unto us. Joshua could teach all that Moses commanded him to the people because they waited and gave him the opportunity to do so. Similarly, we must ensure that we don't become a stumbling block to God's ministers in any way. We must be doers of the word, not hearers only.

## **DAILY BIBLE READING**

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	1Peter	1-2	Ezekiel	28-29
TUE	“	3	“	30-31
WED	“	4-5	“	32
THUR	2 Peter	1-2	“	33
FRI	“	3	“	34-35
SAT	1 John	1-2	“	36
SUN	“	3-4	“	37-38

# 563 Lesson

## DECEIT OF THE GIBEONITES

**MEMORYVERSE:** "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8).

**TEXT:** Joshua 9:1-27

Following the conquest of Ai, Joshua called a gathering of the tribes of Israel at mount Ebal and mount Gerinzim. There he rehearsed "**all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law**" (Joshua 8:34). This public declaration of the law included a restatement of the divine directive that "**of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth**" (Deuteronomy 20: 16). For the Canaanites, it was a public notice of Israel's determined intention to possess their land and a sentence of death to all the inhabitants. The situation elicited two different responses. On one hand, the kings of the Southern region hastily forged a confederacy to resist the children of Israel. On the other, the inhabitants of Gibeon decided to make a peace treaty with them. Rather than put themselves against God's irresistible power, they were ready to bear any condition or hardship. The different decisions of the two parties determined their different destinies. While one party experienced total destruction of their lives, the other party had their lives preserved and a place given them in the land of Canaan.

**PRESERVATION THROUGH PENITENCE AND RECONCILIATION** (Joshua 9:1-6; Luke 14:32; Job 9:4; Isaiah 45:9; Joshua 10:10)

**"And it came to pass, when all the kings which were on this side Jordan, in the hills, and in the valleys, and in all the coasts of the great sea over against Lebanon... heard thereof; That they gathered themselves together,**

**to fight with Joshua and with Israel, with one accord"** (Joshua 9:12).

The heathen kings' response to the imminent attack by Israel, was a hasty confederacy against them. Although the kings were divided by separate interests and often at war with one other, a sense of common danger prompted them to suspend their mutual animosity and unite to fight a common cause. Often, erstwhile, enemies usually form a common front to oppose God. During the time of Christ's earthly ministry, the enmity between the Sadducees and the Pharisees, Pilate and Herod dissolved into friendship and subsequent common opposition to Christ. We are not left in ignorance as Christ had already foretold that; **"if the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you"** (John 15:18). As the world unites to fight the spread of the gospel, the Church must unite together against Satan. All sections of the Church must "work together to ensure total evangelization of our localities. The renewed passion for DAWN (Disciplining a whole Nation) requires our collective effort to ensure its quick and total implementation. We must unite in passionate, prevailing prayer; we must preach the gospel with power and purpose.

**Question 1: Why is it futile to oppose God?**

It is futile for mortal man, to consider any thought of successful resistance to God's word and revelation. The path of wisdom is the path of reconciliation and repentance. **"He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?"** (Job 9:4) The pages of history are replete with results that proclaim disastrous consequence on those who attempt to oppose divine decrees. The Scripture declares: **"woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!"** (Isaiah 45:9 a). Unfortunately, many people in our contemporary times still refuse to be instructed by history or others' experiences. Thus, they nurse the hope of ultimate success, peace and joy while living contrary to God's commandments and precepts.

**Question 2: What lesson does the utter defeat of the confederacy of the kings of Canaan teach us today?**

There is no strength in unity when it is forged against God or His People. There is neither comfort nor security in number when a multitude rises up against the will of God. The word of God warns: **“thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgement”** (Exodus 23:2). **“And when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho and to Ai, They did work wily, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks upon their asses, and wine bottles, old, and rent, and bound up”**. Though the use of deceit to obtain reprieve, they were spared under stringent conditions as **“hewers of wood and drawers of water unto all the congregation”** (verse 21). God hates deceit in speech and actions. Believers are therefore warned not only to desist from deceit but also to watch against being deceived. The devil uses lies and false dreams, revelations and prophecies to deceive people today. His pranks will be more rampant in these last days to the extent that even some elects will be deceived. Any wonder the Scripture repeatedly warns, **“let no man deceive you”** (Ephesians 5:6; 2 Thessalonians 2:3; 1 John 3:7). Christ is the Truth. And he wants all His disciples to live a truthful and transparent life in all their relationship and dealings with others.

**THE DANGER OF WALKING BY SIGHT** (Joshua 9:6-14; Deuteronomy 20:15 1 John 4:1; 1 Kings 14:1-6; 2 Kings 5:20-27)

**“And they said unto Joshua, We are thy servants and Joshua said unto them, Who are ye? And from whence come ye? And they said unto him, From a very far country thy servants are come...”** In their bid to escape the order to destroy the nations living within the compass of Canaan, the Gibeonites resorted to deceit, flattery and falsehood. Knowing that Israel was permitted to enter into peace treaties only with submissive **“cities which are very far off...”** (Deuteronomy 20:15), they sent ambassadors who pretended to represent a country far away so as to qualify for peace with them. To lend credence to the deceit, they **“took old sacks upon their asses, and wine bottles, old, and rent, and bound up”** to make it appear

as if their provision and shoes were dry and worn- out by reason of their supposedly long journey.

The Gibeonites' web of deceit was so carefully spun that it caught even Joshua, that great leader of God's people. They did not hesitate to explain the reason for their request for peace treaty: "**because of the name of the LORD thy God for we have heard the fame of him, and all that he did in Egypt. And all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites, that were beyond Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon, and to Og king of Bashan, which was at Ashtaroath**" (verses 9,10). They cleverly did not mention more recent exploits by Israel such as the miraculous crossing of Jordan or the defeat of Jericho and Ai. They knew that these were recent events that would not be expected to have filtered so far as to reach such "**very far country**" from where they claimed to have come. They also pointed to their dry provisions, torn wine skins and clothes. The Gibeonites also knew that the human nature will make the princes of Israel succumb to their flattery. Relying on human carefulness, visual evidence, taste, common sense and logic, Israel's princes could not see through the Gibeonites' deception.

**Question 3: What lesson can we learn from the fact that the Gibeonites were able to convince and deceive the princes of Israel?**

We live in a world where many persons are not who they claim to be. Like the Gibeonites, some so-called believers employ various strategies to deceive those they come in contact with. This is because they are so economical with information. Our Lord's warning: "**Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgement**" (John 7:24) is still relevant today. During Christ's earthly ministry, those who undertook to judge whether He was the Son of God or not by His outward appearance missed it. We must learn to walk by faith rather than by sight, and not to judge people only by their outward appearance, their titles, and impressions they labor to make. We must prayerfully put every spirit to test. The Scripture warns against the simplicity of believing every spirit and urges us

to try the spirits, whether they are of God because many false prophets are gone out into the world (1 John 4: 1).

Dependence upon the Holy Spirit and upon God's word is important if we must not fall prey to flattery. The princes of Israel were deceived because they failed to consult with God. Instances abound in the Scripture where well-crafted lies meant to deceive men of God who walked by faith were uncovered. When king Jeroboam's wife disguised herself in order to know from prophet Ahijah the fate of her sick son, the Lord revealed her pretence to the prophet (1 Kings 14:1-6). Also, when Gehazi, the servant of Elisha deceitfully obtained gifts from Naaman the Syrian, the Spirit of God revealed his deceit to Elisha (2 Kings 5:20-27). The Lord not only "**searcheth the reins and hearts**" but is also "**a revealer of secrets**" to those who through faith and prayer rely on His guidance.

**Question 4: What can the present-day seeker learn from the decision of the Gibeonites to pursue peace with Israel?**

There was no justification for the deceit by which the Gibeonites sought for peace. Their pretensions were unnecessary because God would have accepted them if they were sincere, truthful and willing to give up their idolatrous practices. However, their ability and willingness to recognize the finger of God in Israel's exploits against powerful nations is instructive. They were fully aware that It was futile to resist the Almighty God. The Gibeonites would condemn many on the last day who have witnessed the power of God in miracles and transformation of lives, and yet remain in unbelief. Our Lord Jesus Christ said, "**if I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father**" (John 15:24).

Also, the Gibeonites must have compared their own experiences under their idols with what they had seen and heard of the power and wisdom of the God of Israel. In addition, they exhibited commendable sincerity in their willingness to admit new truths in place of their long established but impotent religious customs and practices.

They seemed to have considered Apostle Paul's question: **"What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?"** (Romans 6:21). No man has a justifiable reason to continue in darkness in the face of verifiable truth and obvious light. Furthermore, their submission was commendable because they chose a course that was contrary to that of their neighbors, their large number notwithstanding. Unlike the Gibeonites, many sinners today are swayed to continue in sin by the sheer number of sinners and popular acceptance of sinful lifestyles in the society. Finally, their decision was speedy, they did not wait until Israel had laid siege against their cities; it would have been too late, The Scripture warns: **"behold now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation"** (2 Corinthians.6:2b).

The only way open to sinners to avoid God's displeasure is repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. It is unwise to delay until the siege of terminal illness or approaching death which may make repentance impossible.

**THE PERIL OF FALSE FOUNDATION** (Joshua 9:16; Proverbs 12:19; Matthew 10:26; Joshua 10:1-4; 2 Samuel 21:1)

**"And it came to pass at the end of three days after they had made a league with them, that they heard that they were their neighbors, and that they dwelt among them"** (Joshua 9:16). The deceit of the Gibeonites concerning the country of their origin was uncovered after only three days. This is proof that advantages obtained by falsehood do not endure for long. **"The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment"** (Proverbs 12:19). In marketplace, office, marriage, academics, etc., whenever we are tempted to tell lies or exaggerate, we should remember the word of Christ: **"...there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed, and hid, that shall not be known"** (Matthew 10:26). The shame of deceit when discovered becomes far more odious than the fault it was meant to cover. On the other hand, truth brings honor and nobility particularly In difficult situations.

Although the deception by the Gibeonites was now discovered. The hands of Israel were tied because of the peace treaty they had made with them. Abrogating the treaty would have brought the Lord's name to contempt and disrepute among the Canaanites.

**Question 5: What lesson does Israel's upholding of the Treaty entered into by deception with the Gibeonites teach us?**

Shortly after the treaty, God granted Israel one of their most outstanding victories in their military campaign (Joshua 10:1-14). Much later also, God afflicted Israel with a famine because Saul had disregarded the treaty and slain the Gibeonites (2 Samuel 21:1). It is evident therefore that God is pleased when those who do not know Him renounce their idolatrous practices and come under the sheltering fold of the Most High, however detestable their antecedents. Though from heathen nations, Ruth and Rahab were highly honored by God with Christ's human ancestry, following their renunciation of their idolatrous pedigree and placing their faith in God. This is in agreement with the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: **"he that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"** (John 6:37).

Another lesson here is that God expects us to honor and keep our vows, words and promises. God is displeased when married partners forget their marriage vows of love and faithfulness or business partners jettison the terms of their partnership agreement for the greed of gain.

Seeing they could not plunder the Gibeonites because of the treaty, **"all the congregation murmured against the princes"**. The congregation considered neither the circumstances in which the princes entered into the treaty nor the compulsion of the treaty made in God's name. It is instructive to note that despite the murmuring, Joshua and the princes acted conscientiously; they felt themselves bound by their solemn promise to protect the Gibeonites.

**Question 6: How should leaders handle murmuring among the people?**



It is worth mentioning that the princes did not disregard the reaction of the children of Israel. They explained to them why they must not lift their hands against the Gibeonites: **"we have sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them"** (verse 19). What a lesson to contemporary leaders!

## DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	1 John	5	Ezekiel	39
TUE	2 John, 3John		“	40
WED	Jude		“	41-42
THUR	Revelation	1-2	“	43
FRI	“	3-4	“	44
SAT	“	5-6	“	45
SUN	“	7-8	“	46-47

# 564 Lesson

## ISRAEL'S VICTORY OVER THE AMORITES

**MEMORY VERSE:** "And the LORD discomfited them before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them along the way that goeth up to Bethhoron, and smote them to Azekah, and unto Makkedah" (Joshua 10: 10).

**TEXT: Joshua 10:1-43**

**T**he conquest of Jericho, Ai and the submission of the Gibeonites to be perpetual servants of the Israelites created serious fear in the heart of Adonizedec, king of Jerusalem. Consequently, he summoned the neighbouring cities for an alliance against Gibeon who they regarded as "a great city" and as "one of the royal cities". The five kings of the Amorites formed a confederacy against the Gibeonites with a view to punish them for their decision.

**THE CONFEDERACY AGAINST GIBEON AND THEIR REQUEST FOR JOSHUA'S ASSISTANCE** (Joshua 10:1-7; Exodus 15: 14-16; Deuteronomy 11:25)

**"Wherefore Adonizedec king of Jerusalem sent unto Boham king of Hebron, and unto Piram king of Jarmuth, and unto Japhia king of Lachish, and unto Debir king of Eglon, saying, Come up unto me, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon: for it hath made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel"** (Joshua 10:3,4).

The covenant the Gibeonites made with Joshua got king Adonizedec infuriated and made them instant enemies of their neighbors who saw great danger in allowing the invading Israelites take over their land. Hence, in a bid to prevent their overthrow, they formed a confederacy to recapture Gibeon. This brought serious trouble for the Gibeonites as their old allies now turn to be their enemies.

**Question 1: What lesson can we learn from the confederacy by these kings to attack the Gibeonites?**

The unity of the southern kings to attack the Gibeonites shows that the devil is not always happy anytime we make decisions to serve the living God. Because Satan wants us to be in perpetual captivity, he uses former friends, business associates, colleagues, and family members to persecute us. But those who are wise will not consider the gains of the moment: their focus will be to identify fully with God's people and finally make it to heaven where they will dwell eternally with God.

**Question 2: What lessons can we learn from the Gibeonites' request to Joshua?**

Following the threat from the kings, the men of Gibeon sent an urgent message to Joshua for help not only on the grounds of kindness and sympathy but of justice. The message to Joshua clearly shows that they had no confidence in their strength or their resources. As they cried unto Joshua for deliverance so must the sinner seek Jesus for his salvation and deliverance from sins. Also, as they depended upon the covenant of peace which Joshua had ratified, so must we depend upon Christ, our Mediator of the new covenant.

Joshua's prompt response to the plight of the Gibeonites is instructive. Although he and the leaders of Israel had been deceived by the Gibeonites, they went ahead to rescue them from the hands of their enemies. This is a proof of Joshua's integrity as a leader and a lesson to believers. When we truly forgive those who offend us, we must not find it difficult to help them when opportunity arises.

**DIVINE ENCOURAGEMENT AND THE DEFEAT OF THE CONFEDERACY ARMY** (Joshua 10:8-15; Psalms 18:13-14; 77:17; Isaiah 30:30)

**"And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee"** (Joshua 10:8). It is indeed commendable that at such a critical moment, Joshua received an encouragement from the Lord. This is a clear indication of his total dependence on the Lord and a divine approval of his actions. When we are faced with similar situations while on the path of duty, we are

expected to rely upon God and HIS word. We should not be discouraged by daunting challenges before us. Rather, we should depend solely on God and His promises.

**"And the LORD discomfited them before Israel. And slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon."** The obedience of the children of Israel to God's instruction gave them outstanding victory. As they did their own part of the task, the Lord perfected everything concerning their victory over these heathen kings. Besides the terror that struck the enemies, a greater number of them were killed by hailstones than by the sword of the Israelites.

It is instructive to note that Joshua was not willing to take any chance. He was bent on total destruction of God's enemies, as the Lord had commanded. No wonder he was moved by the Spirit of God to pray that the day be lengthened. He pleaded for divine help for longer light at Gibeon and Ajalon so as to pursue his enemies and overthrow them. This prayer expressed by Joshua was not meant for his selfish interest: it was to fulfill God's purpose. It was a divinely inspired prayer.

**Question 3: What are the essentials of effective prayer?**

Our prayers can only be effective and answered like that of Joshua if we pray in line with God's will (1 John 5:14). We must pray by faith and lead a constant holy life. These were what prompted God to swiftly answer the prayers of Joshua. Also, those who take sides with God and follow His direction will always experience His aid and victory.

**THE CAPTURE AND EXECUTION OF THE AMORITE KINGS** (Joshua 10:15-27; Exodus 11:7; Psalms 107:40; 110:5; 149:8-9; Isaiah 26:5-6; Malachi 4:3)

What an irony that the kings of the Amorites who boasted of their military strength and resources fled and hid themselves in a cave! Little did they know that divine judgment had come upon them. Joshua's command that they should roll great stones upon the mouth of the cave and some men to watch over it shows that he was not ready to leave anything to fate. He reminded the children of Israel that the Lord had already delivered their enemies

into their hands. As such, there was no need for any of them to entertain fear as they pursued their enemies. Joshua knew that such a triumph was part of God's daily business with His people. He had granted them similar victories over all their enemies in the past. Similarly, leaders should encourage those under them to take bold steps of faith irrespective of the challenge staring them in the face. They should be reminded of God's past dealings with His people and His promises for the faithful.

**Question 5: What can rulers and leaders learn from the humiliation and destruction of these kings?**

The five kings of the Amorites were eventually captured and killed by Joshua. The humiliation of these kings reminds us of the despairing end of the wicked. Knowing that they would not be able to resist the children of Israel, they fled to hide themselves in the cave. Unfortunately, the cave could not guarantee their safety as they were caught. No matter how far the sinner runs, he cannot escape God's judgement. Although he may flee from human punishment, it is certain that he cannot escape divine justice. Our refuge should only be the Lord. If you are still far away from the kingdom of God, all you need is to confess and forsake your sins and accept Jesus Christ into your life. He is the only refuge that guarantees safety on earth and in eternity.

We also behold the utter degradation of the kings. It was far humiliating than that of their subjects. As they were ring leaders in this revolt, their end was terrible the children of Israel put their feet on their necks. This was the most significant act. It was a picture of Israel's victory over all their enemies in subsequent battles.

### **THE CONQUEST OF SEVEN OTHER CITIES AND THEIR KINGS** (Joshua 10:28-43)

After the destruction of the allied kings, Joshua went further to take over Makkedah. He utterly destroyed the city and everyone in it. There was rapid succession of victory and extermination which swept the whole of Southern cities. **"All these kings and their land did**

**Joshua take at one time, because the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel" (Joshua 10:42).** They could not have obtained the victory if God had not undertaken to fight for them. We conquer when God fights for us. If God be for us who can be against us?

It is worth mentioning that after Joshua defeated all these kings, he returned with all Israel to the camp to Gilgal. Every soldier of Christ must learn to return to his Gilgal (the place of pilgrims' rest and refreshment). We are not expected to return to Gilgal only in times of defeat and danger but also in times of victory to give thanks to the Lord who "always causeth us to triumph in Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:14).

**DAILY BIBLE READING**

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Revelation	9-10	Ezekiel	48
TUE	"	11-12	Daniel	1
WED	"	13-14	"	2
THUR	"	15-16	"	3
FRI	"	17-18	"	4
SAT	"	19-20	"	5
SUN	"	21-22	"	6

**END OF OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES**

# BEGINNING OF NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

## 565 Lesson

## BELIEVERS' SPIRITUAL LIFE

**MEMORY VERSE:** "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8: 1).

### **TEXT: Romans 8:1-17**

**O**ur text deals with the glorious liberty and victory of believers in Christ. In the previous chapter, Paul the apostle painted a grim picture of a life without the grace of God. He showed that such a person is laden with guilt, defeat and misery because of bondage to sin. In the present chapter of the book of Romans, he however shifted attention to the new life in the Spirit and the experience of victory over sin which can be obtained through union with Christ. Whereas the seventh chapter of Romans ended with a cry of helplessness "**O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?**" The eighth chapter brings affirmation of victory through the Spirit of God (Romans 7:24; 8:1).

A sinner who has not experienced the saving grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ cannot withstand the terrible force of sin. No matter how well instructed or refined, the unregenerate soul cannot produce the fruit of the Spirit. At best, all his righteous deeds would pass as filthy rags before God. Besides, he would not be free from condemnation. However, when such a person truly encounters the transforming grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ, he is then ushered into true freedom from sin and begins to enjoy regular communion with God. This new life in the Spirit, subsequent to the removal of condemnation and characterized by total freedom from sin is the normal life of Christians. Such a life is sustained by the Holy Spirit and it is the kind that pleases God.

**Question 1: According to our text, what is the foundation of the spiritual life of believers?**

**THE DESCRIPTION AND BENEFITS OF NEW LIFE IN CHRIST** (Romans 8: 1-4; 1 Corinthians 1:30, 31; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 5:16)

The spiritual life of a believer begins the moment he believes in Christ. At that moment, he receives a new life and is free from condemnation. The moment a sinner repents of his sins and trusts Christ for salvation he becomes a member of His body. This new position of being in Christ is not achieved by self-effort or struggle but it is an act of God that brings total transformation. **"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord"** (1 Corinthians 1:30,31).

**Question 2: Mention some of the blessings of being in Christ.**

Being in Christ opens the door to many spiritual blessings for the believer. The first is that he is now free from condemnation for all past sins. This freedom is twofold: he is free from God's condemnation and also delivered from self-condemnation. God, who was offended by his sins, having been satisfied by the sacrifice of Christ, pronounces him "not guilty". Also, his conscience which had been laden with feelings of guilt on account of sins committed is also set free from condemnation. So, a believer in Christ is free from condemnation because God does not condemn him; and if well instructed, his conscience does not condemn him either. The only source of condemnation would be the devil, the accuser of the brethren. But the blood of Jesus is the token that silences him and his agents.

Another blessing of being in Christ is the deliverance from the power of sin. Not only are true believers in Christ set free from the guilt of sin, they are also delivered from the tyranny and dominion of sin. Before conversion, a sinner commits sin because he is under the **"law of sin and death"**. This law of sin and death is a spiritual principle



just as the law of gravity is real in the physical realm. All physical objects on earth are subject to the pull of gravity except a higher power neutralizes or suspends its force. So also the law of sin and death has dominion over a person and keeps him under bondage to sin until a higher law, **"the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus"** cancels its dominion. By operating under the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, a believer is freed from the power of sin even though he is living in the domain where temptations and corruptions still abound. True believers in Christ are set free from sin and given the power to be what God wants them to be, and do all He would have them do.

The freedom of believers is not secured by keeping the law but is consequent upon what Jesus Christ has done. The law could only show how weak a person is in doing God's will; it could not confer the power to lead a righteous life. **"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit"** (Romans 8:3,4). The law could not justify a sinner but faith in.. Christ does.. Jesus came in human form to pay the penalty for the sin of mankind and through His death and resurrection, He broke the power of sin. Now, those who believe in Him come under the control of the Holy Spirit and no longer under the control of their sinful nature. The Holy spirit is the one who gives believers the power to live above sin. His presence in a Person's life is both the basis and evidence that he is truly Christ's. If any man has not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his, but the presence of the Holy Ghost in a believer is a seal of divine ownership (Romans 8:9b,16; 2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13).

**CONTRAST BETWEEN THE OLD LIFE AND NEW LIFE IN CHRIST** (Romans 8:5-11; Galatians 5:19-22; Colossians 3: 1-7; Matthew 6:33).

The new life of believers in Christ is a Spirit-controlled life. It is not the old life reformed but a completely new life. The Scriptures use expressions such as **"dead and alive in**

**Christ", "new creature", "new man"** to describe the new life in Christ. The old life and the new life of a believer are clearly different from one another. The contrast between them may be seen in two perspectives: their character and affections. Whereas the old life is carnal in character and affections, the new life is spiritual and heavenly.

Sinners are unregenerate and controlled basically by their sinful nature. But believers are dead to sin alive to God and led by the Spirit of God. Though the old life minds earthly and carnal things, the new has its affection set on heavenly and spiritual things. The spiritual mind looks upon earthly treasures as gilded toys and holds them with loose hands, but the carnal mind considers the wealth of this world as its chief gain. The carnal mind would rather have its own benefits here and now, but the spiritual mind is willing to wait till the hereafter to receive its good things.

**Question 3: Point out some differences between the carnal and the spiritual mind.**

People who live under the control of their human nature allow their desires to dictate their thoughts, conducts, actions and reactions. They yield to the dictates and impulse of their fallen nature. But true believers are free from the control of the carnal nature, they are ruled and directed by the Holy spirit. The Holy spirit controls their mind and entire life. The result of a carnal life is spiritual death but a spirit-controlled life will result in life and peace Those who are controlled by their human nature are without the Holy Spirit and they cannot please God if they continue to live that way. One can only live to please the Lord by yielding his thoughts and desires to the control of the Holy Spirit. In the fifth chapter of the epistle to the Galatians, Paul the apostle points out the effects of a life controlled by human desires in contrast with the Spirit-controlled life. The carnal mind will produce the works of the flesh but the Spirit-controlled life will produce the fruit of the Spirit. So then, if a believer fails to yield himself to the control of the Holy Spirit, he will bring forth the works of the flesh. To avoid this, a believer should walk by the Spirit, live in the Spirit, pray in the Spirit and do all things by the power and control of the Holy Spirit.

**TRUE MARKS OF GOD'S CHILDREN** (Romans 8:12-17; I John 2:29; 3:7-10; Titus 1:16).

Paul the apostle emphasized that true believers are God's children by adoption. As many as receive Jesus Christ, God gives them power to become children of God (John 1:12). In Roman culture, adoption of a child was common practice. In front of many witnesses, the father who is adopting claimed the child as his own son and from that moment the child remained a legitimate and bona fide member of his family. He would then be treated and given equal rights as a biological child. He becomes a joint-heir with other children in the family. This is the thought of Paul the apostle as he emphasized the sonship of believers. This new position of believers in Christ confers some special privileges on them. Now, they can call God their Father and can manifest His nature. They also become special objects of God's love and can receive guidance and instruction from Him.

**Question 4: What are the marks of true believers in Christ?**

In our text, apostle Paul highlighted the unmistakable marks of true Christians. They are known by their character and conduct. They do not live to gratify their fleshly desires but they are led and controlled by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit controls their appetites, temperament and pursuits. They are led by the Holy Spirit in the path of obedience to God's word and He gives them the power to mortify the deeds of the flesh.

**Question 5: How can one recognize the true leading of the Holy Spirit?**

The mark of a Spirit-controlled life is what stands a true believer out from the multitude of mere professors of religion. The Holy Spirit leads a true child of God in every aspects of life, be it in the choice of career, spouse, or in decisions concerning specific life situations. He leads and directs believers in evangelism, prayer and other areas of Christian service. In general, the Holy Spirit leads a believer to do God's will and obey His word. He never leads a person to act contrary to the written word of God.

There are people who profess that they know God and claim to be his children but they live in disobedience to the Scriptures. Such people are not walking in the truth but are either deceived or are deliberate liars.

Genuine leading of the Holy Spirit may be recognized by certain features which are clearly shown in our text. First, the Holy Spirit gives the urge to do the will of God and put to death the sinful tendencies of our human nature (Romans 8:23; Philippians 2:13; Titus 2:11,12). Any leading therefore that pampers the flesh or makes provision for its gratification cannot be attributed to the Holy Spirit. Second, His leading is always in harmony with the Holy Scriptures (1 Corinthians 2:12,13; 2 Peter 1:20,21). Third, the leading of the spirit results in emancipation from bondage. Any leading that produces bondage to fear, the flesh, Satan, demons, etc. cannot be from the Holy Spirit (Romans 8: 1.2,15). Fourth, when He leads, the Holy Spirit gives direction concerning God's perfect will Fifth, He reassures believers of their new position in Christ. He confirms their sonship and imparts to them the confidence to call God Father. So, when the Holy Spirit is truly leading. He makes a person to speak or act with the attitude of a child in the family, seeking nothing but the glory of the father and the well being of other, members of the family. Sixth, the. Holy Spirit produces evidence of perseverance and submission to the will of God. Even though the believer knows he is a child of God, he is equally aware that the Father may sometimes allow temporal suffering to come his way, So, he is ready to submit and persevere in such cases, knowing that his Father knows better. Seventh, the Holy Spirit leads a believer regardless of temporal sufferings in this world, since there is an eternal weight of glory awaiting him in heaven (Romans 8:17,18). For this reason, his eyes are set on future glory and the alluring things of this world lose their glitter and glamour, Neither pleasure nor adversity can distract his gaze from heavenly glory. This glorious and victorious life is only possible through the power of the Spirit and can only be enjoyed by those who believe in Christ.

## DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Matthew	1-2	Daniel	7
TUE	“	3-4	“	8
WED	“	5	“	9
THUR	“	6-7	“	10
FRI	“	8-9	“	11
SAT	“	10-11	“	12

# 566 Lesson

## THE TRIUMPH OF BELIEVERS IN CHRIST

**MEMORY VERSE:** "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 15:57).

**TEXT: Romans 8:18-39**

In the previous section of this chapter, Paul the apostle had shown the happy state of those who are in Christ. They are free from sin and from the condemnation it brings to those who are enslaved by it. In addition to this glorious freedom, true believers are led by the Spirit of God and they enjoy fellowship with Him.

However, in the present section of the chapter, Paul shows that this new life in Christ is not going to be without opposition and serious challenges. Though God is for us and we are free from condemnation, there will still be persecutions, tribulation, distress and such negative things that will confront us during our earthly sojourn. "The well known triumvirate of evil: the flesh, the world and Satan will put up their strongest resistance against believers. However, we are assured of victory through Christ.

A brief survey of our text shows Paul the apostle shedding light on the concept of future glory in relation to our present suffering, the earnest expectation and hope of believers and the whole creation for full redemption and restoration, the intercessory ministry of the Spirit and His aid to heaven-bound pilgrims, God's overruling providence, keeping power and the preservation of the redeemed, and the ultimate triumph of believers in Christ. In summary, our text contains two essential pillars which serve as an anchor of hope for the believer: hope of future glory and assurance of final victory.

**Question 1:** Point out the major issues that Paul addressed in our text.

**THE PROMISED HOPE OF GLORY FOR SUFFERING SAINTS** (Romans 8:18-25; 2 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Peter 1:6; 4:12-14; John 16:33; Colossians 1:5,27).

Our text begins with a reckoning of faith in which all the present sufferings of believers are weighed against the eternal glory awaiting them in the new heaven and the new earth. The present challenges that believers face are insignificant in view of the future glory that shall be revealed in them (Romans 4:18).

The fact that both believers and unbelievers alike are often faced with divers kinds of troubles in this world cannot be denied. At one time or the other, every believer will have to face the wind of adversity probably in form of disappointment, loss or pain. Our text shows that they are the inescapable outcome of a decaying world that will only be terminated when God creates a new heaven and a new earth.

**Question 2: In what ways can a proper perception of believers' troubles bring comfort in time of adversity?**

Though there is no scriptural guarantee that exonerates believers from the challenges of life, we are promised the comfort and strength of the Holy Spirit in all our life's struggles. Jesus said, "**These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world**" (John 16:33). The world in its present state does not constitute a perfect dwelling place for believers. There is so much evil, disorder, environmental disasters and tragedies. Despite the impact of our redemption in Christ, believers sometimes have to endure and groan under the influence of these negative events. This should not surprise us because the redeemed, though perfect and complete in Christ, is living in an imperfect and sinful world.

The Holy Spirit however, helps us to know that our sufferings are temporal, lasting only for the present time. Second, we must recognize that our light afflictions cannot be compared with the glory awaiting us in heaven. Third,

the Spirit helps us to know that in all our afflictions, we are not alone. He is the *Paraclete*, the One to help us, so much so that even when we cannot pray much, He helps our infirmities (Romans 8:26). Fourth. He makes us remember that God in His sovereignty can make even those things that seem negative and painful to work out for our good (Romans 8:28; Genesis 50:19,20).

Apart from these, the apostle wrote of the future "**glory which shall be revealed in us**". This is a clear reference to the final glorification of believers. In that glorified state, believers will be totally free from all the limitations that this sin-cursed world imposes on their soul and body. We shall have new bodies and inhabit a new heaven and a new earth. There shall no longer be any sorrow, death, disease or pain. Isaiah prophesied: "**Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away**" (Isaiah 51: 11). The hope of eternal glorification should encourage believers and diminish the impact of their present sufferings.

While waiting for the glorified state, the entire creation is groaning under the effect of Adam's sin. In our text three types of groaning are highlighted. The first is the groaning of creation under the consequences of man's original sin (Romans 8:19-22). The curse placed upon the earth affected plants, animals and the regular cycles of nature. The creature longs for this curse to be removed when "**there shall be no more curse**" (Revelation 22:3a). Also, there is the groaning of believers as they engage in conflict against the forces of evil. This is the groaning of a woman in travail but it shall soon translate into a lasting joy (John 16:21,22; Romans 8:23).

The third kind of groaning is that of the Holy Spirit as He intercedes for believers. In time of trouble or weakness, the Holy Spirit steps in and helps their infirmity (Romans 8:26,27).

**THE PURPOSE OF GOD AND HELP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT** (Romans 8:26-30; John 14: 16; 2 Timothy 1:9, 10; John 3: 16; 6:37,47; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9)



Apostle Paul pointed out that one of the major works of the Holy Spirit in ensuring the victory of believers is His ministry of intercession (Romans 8:26).

**Question 3: How does the Holy Spirit help believers in prayer?**

Apart from not knowing what to pray for as we ought, there are times we cannot express or put into words the burden we feel in our hearts. At best, we groan or stammer, hoping that God, in His omniscience would understand our unutterable desires and give us what is best. But at this point of weakness, the Holy Spirit intervenes and intercedes on our behalf. First, He helps us to pray aright by inspiring our requests; then, He motivates us to pray in the Spirit (Ephesians 6:18). He interprets our inexpressible prayers before the Father (Romans 8:27). Such Spirit-assisted prayers receive answers from God.

**Question 4: Explain the notion that all things work together for good for those who love God. Can this be used as an excuse to do evil?**

In addition to the Holy Spirit's help in intercession, He also helps believers to know that "**all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose**" (Romans 8:28). The notion that all things work together for good helps believers in going through challenges of life. Though some situations or events may appear adverse and painful, God, in His sovereignty, turns them to work for our overall good. For example, Paul said his imprisonment and ill-treatment turned out for the furtherance of the gospel (Philippians 1:12). Whatever happens in a believer's life therefore, can be used of God for His own glory.

However, the idea that all things work together for good cannot be used to justify sin. We cannot do evil that good may come. Indeed, all things work together for good for them that love God. Anyone who deliberately goes into sin with the false notion that good will come has missed the point.

Moreover, our text shows that all things work together for good for those who are called according to His purpose.

Those who are called are the ones who respond to the universal call to repentance. Those who reject the gospel message prove themselves unworthy of God's call and, as such, they are rejected. Their rejection is not because God is unwilling to save them or that they are predestinated to die unsaved, but that they deliberately refused to accept God's invitation.

God's purpose is that sinners should be saved. His divine love drew the plan of salvation and effected it by the death and resurrection of His Son. Those who respond to the call are justified and would be glorified, but those who reject the call of God would be damned and cast into hell.

So, no one can say that he is predestined to be lost. The truth is that such an individual chose to reject God's provision through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

**THE PRESERVATION AND TRIUMPH OF BELIEVERS**  
(Romans 8:31-39; Psalm 118:6; Revelation 12:11; Zechariah 3:1-4; 1 Corinthians 15:57; John 10:27-29)

The last portion of our text deals with the subject of believer's security and their preservation in every situation and circumstances of life. Though Christians face hardships and foes, there is divine assurance that they shall triumph. The basis for this certainty of victory is found in the thirty first verse of Romans chapter eight: **"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"** Obviously, the answer is that if God be for us no one can be against us.

**Question 5: Mention some of the foes or hardships Christians may face and state the basis of believers' victory over them.**

The apostle proceeds to mention a variety of situations that are incapable of undermining believers' security in Christ. The challenges of life are not strong enough to overpower the believer because God is for him. God who gave His only beloved Son in order to secure our salvation will certainly not withhold from us anything that will aid us in our Christian journey.

The apostle proceeds to buttress the believer's invincibility in Christ with certain questions. The first is, "**who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth**" (Romans 8:33). This is a reference to the devil who is the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10). It is he who presses charges against believers, always pointing out their faults and imperfections. But believers have victory over Satan's accusations through the efficacy of Christ's atonement. Through faith in Christ, believers are justified and all the accusations of Satan against them are nullified. God forgives and justifies those who believe in Christ, and as such, there is no legal ground for any accuser to press charges against them (Acts 13:38,39)

The second question is, "**Who is he that condemneth?**" (Romans 8:34a). One of the strategies of Satan is to fill the heart of believers with self-condemnation. He tries to make them feel worthless and unqualified for God's love. Again to overcome this, God provided an answer in Christ. Christ died for our sins and was raised again for our justification. In addition to this, He ascended to heaven and is seated on the right hand of God, making intercession for us. The death of Christ settled the penalty for our sins, His resurrection guaranteed our new life, His ascension to heaven paved the way for our exaltation above principalities and powers, and His intercession takes care of whatever need or exigencies may arise in our lives. So, if Christ does not condemn us, no one has any legal right to do so.

Thirdly, "**who shall separate us from the love of Christ?**" (Romans 8:35). Following this question is a list of challenges that believers face in life – tribulation distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril or sword. When we pass through serious persecution or hard times, we should not think that God has stopped loving us. Whether we face illness, imprisonment, natural disaster or even death we should remember God's love towards us remains unchanging. It is a grave mistake to measure the love of God by any yardstick other than the death of Christ. When things go wrong with us, He can make them right. The true proof of His love is not the temporal benefits He

has given to us now but Christ's death: when we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).

In view of God's great love for us, there is nothing that can overcome us. Death cannot separate us from God's love in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:2); neither can life, angels, principalities, powers, things present, things to come, nor any other creature. Situations, circumstances or the unseen forces of evil cannot separate true believers from the love of God in Christ. **“Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Romans 8:37).**

### DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Mathew	13	Hosea	3-5
TUE	“	14-15	“	6-8
WED	“	16-17	“	9-10
THUR	“	18	“	11-12
FRI	“	19-20	“	13-14
SAT	“	21	Joel	1-2
SUN	“	22	“	3

# 567 Lesson

## TRUE CHILDREN OF GOD

**MEMORY VERSE: "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26)**

### **TEXT: Romans 9:1-24**

**T**he creation and existence of man is purely God's idea. Though He was satisfied that He created man in His own image and after His likeness, man lost that nature through sin that disqualified them from being children of God. But through His love and mercy, He made provision to redeem all men from the power and consequences of sin through Christ. Thus, man's redemption or salvation is preceded by repentance and faith in the atoning work of Christ at Calvary, which makes a sinner a child of God.

### **Question 1: Who is a child of God?**

Having rejected Christ, the Jews remained wedded to the Mosaic law and its rites as grounds for relationship with God. It is against this background that Paul, the apostle in our text explains the criterion for becoming a child of God, namely, faith in Christ's sacrifice for both Jews and Gentiles. Many religious people and assemblies today also hold certain religious activities like, praying and fasting, possession and reading of Bible, bearing of Christian names, regular attendance at fellowship, almsgiving, water baptism, among others, as evidence of their relationship with God. None of these can turn a man to be a child of God. In fact, the scripture affirms that "... **whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him**" (1 John 3:6). While some people have responded appropriately with repentance from sin and faith in Christ and have been saved, the scripture reveals that many people are still children of the flesh, disobedience, wrath,

the devil and hell (Luke 16:8; Romans 9:8; John 3:1-7; Ephesians 2: 2-3; Acts 13:10; 1 John 3,10; Matthew: 13: 15).

**PAUL'S CONCERN FOR THE SALVATION OF THE ISRAELITES** (Romans 9:1-5; 10:1-4; I Corinthians 1:30; John 8:32-36; Matthew 23:37; Luke 18:18

**Question 2: Why was Paul so burdened for the salvation of the Israelites?**

The children of Israel displayed stark ignorance of the truth that sets men free from sin. Paul knew that they had rejected the righteousness of God through unbelief and relied only on religion and self-righteousness. When Christ pointed out their need of spiritual freedom, they argued that they were never in bondage to any man. But **"Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin"** (John 8:34). In the ensuing discourse, Christ revealed to them that they harbor murderous intentions against Him and were liars like the devil, whom He called their father.

The reality of their sinfulness, in spite of their great past privileges in God, informed Paul's passion for their salvation. Paul enumerated those privileges to include their adoption by God from a mass of idolatrous nations, the presence and glory of God which they witnessed, their covenants with Him, the law they received by the disposition of angels, the holy ordinances (service) committed unto them, the promises of Scripture, their holy paternity and, last of all, Christ the Messiah came through them (2 Samuel 7:23; Deuteronomy 4:7,8). As great as their privileges in God, so also was their unbelief and rejection of Christ through whom God purposed to save them.

Paul was also burdened because of the present and eternal consequences of the practice of religion without salvation. Though religious, they were alienated from God like every other Gentile sinner and would forever be banished from Him if they fail to repent and believe the gospel. Their

spiritual blindness, loss of the privilege of salvation and the consequent eternal damnation had earlier made Christ to weep over Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37; Luke 18:18).

Apart from Christ and Paul who knew the damnable end of all sinners in hell, and inmate of hell who knew the truth too late was also passionate in his plea for believers to reach others with the gospel (Luke 16:19,23,27-31; 2 Corinthians 5:11). Paul's compassion was for **"my brethren"**, **"kinsmen"**, the **"Israelites"**. Though his call was to be an apostle to the Gentiles, he was still passionate and interceding for the salvation of his Jewish kinsmen. This is a lesson for all Christian servants and missionaries. As he wished to bear their punishment if that would lead to their conversion, so must we. Paul was Christ-like in his love and willingness to sacrifice for the salvation of his people. Selfless sacrifice and service for the salvation of fellow human beings are marks of true children of God. Those who are not willing to sacrifice time, talent, money, energy, comfort, safety and other resources at their disposal for the salvation of others do not understand the demands of our calling. Everyone who is truly saved must live out the character of Christ-like compassion for perishing souls and make sacrifices to rescue the perishing (Matthew 5:14-16; John 13:34,35).

**THE PRIVILEGED PATERNITY OF THE JEWS** (Romans 9:6-14; Genesis 21:22; John 1:12,13; 8:32-45; Galatians 3:13-29)

**Question 3: Why did Paul make allusion to the fatherhood of the Jews in our text?**

Paul alluded to the Jews' paternity to show that salvation is the work of God. The patriarch, Abraham, was chosen and called. God promised to give him a child through whom *all* the families of the earth would be blessed. Before the fulfillment of that promise, Abraham, on his own volition chose and had a son, Ishmael. God refused Abraham's request for Ishmael to become the promised child. The Lord knew that His promised child would come at the appropriate time without any human effort. And God fulfilled His promise. So, **"They which are the children**

**of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed"** (Verse 8).

The second allusion to support the fact that salvation is not by works but by grace finds expression in the story of Esau and Jacob, "**For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth**" (Romans 9: 11), His choice of Jacob over Esau while they were yet unborn was not because any of them had sinned but a design of His goodwill to fulfill His eternal purpose for the good of all. This divine design must be respected and accepted with faith knowing that there is no unrighteousness with God. Should anyone input unrighteousness to Him, the scripture clarifies that His purpose was to preserve a holy nation through whom the promised "seed" of Abraham would come to save the whole world, the descendants of Ishmael and Esau inclusive (Genesis 12:3; 22: 18; 26:4; Galatians 3: 13-26). In spite of God's choice, everyone must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved,

God loves all men, both Jews and Gentiles. "**But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise "by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe."** Now, there is no distinction between the Jews and the Gentiles with regards to establishing relationship with God. Since salvation is by God's mercy and unmerited grace, all are required to exercise faith in Christ for salvation, "**There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither bond nor free. There is neither male nor female: for ye are ,all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise"** (Galatians 3:28,29),

**Question 4: How can one become a child of God?**

Reliance on holy ancestry or other past privileges for relationship with God rather than on the new and living Way was the undoing of the Jews. No Jew or Gentile can be saved based on holy parentage. Everyone must be born



again to be a child of God. True children of God are those born, **“not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God”**. Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ (John 1:13; 3:16; Ephesians 2:8). **“So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy”** (Romans 9:16). Paul’s conclusion from the allusion made to the Jewish ancestry teaches that no one should depend on self efforts or parents’ salvation and relationship with God but personally trust in His mercy to obtain their own salvation. Salvation, faith, righteousness, love and obedience to the truth of God’s word are the hallmarks of true children of God.

**THE SOVEREIGN WILL AND MERCY OF GOD** (Romans 9:17-24; 1:21-32; Exodus 9:15,16; 18:11; 2 Peter 3:9)

**“For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth”** (Romans 9:17) God loves righteousness but hates sin. His attitude and disposition to sinners and the righteous are articulated in His word and past dealings with men. The apostle cited the case of Pharaoh to affirm that God is righteous and just in judging the obstinate and showing mercy to whom He wills. Understandably, God has given power of choice to everyone as a free moral agent. He also has power to influence it and can choose not to do so. For those who have inured their hearts with wicked acts to the point that they become fearless as to question the sovereignty of God, He could leave them to head on to their destruction. How apt then the statement that: **“even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient”** (Romans 1:28)?

Pharaoh’s heart became hardened through repeated acts of wickedness and oppression of the people of God. Repeated acts of sin hardens the heart to warnings from God and His word. And those who chose not to retain His knowledge and fear in their hearts, He gives them up to their own reprobate minds to continue in their

wickedness. Yet, God's sovereignty and purpose must be made manifest. **"For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth. And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth"** (Exodus 9:15,16).

God allowed Pharaoh's reign of terror and wickedness to grow to an unbearable level so He could quash his rebellion to prove His sovereign power and have His name declared throughout the earth. Again, Jethro, Moses's father-in-law testified that, **"Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them"** (Exodus 18: 11). News of God's great judgment of Egypt and other nations, for instance, led to the salvation of Rahab. God's judgment in the earth is designed to make other people learn righteousness. The purpose of judging the obstinate is to serve as a deterrent and lead others to salvation.

**Question 5: Why does God bear long with the wicked?**

The longsuffering of God is highlighted in the text. His patience with the wicked in this world is to show the riches of His grace and glory on the vessels of mercy. The scripture affirms that God does not delight in judging people. So, He bears long with them so they can repent. Those who remain obstinate in their sin in spite of God's command to all men to repent should not mistake His delayed judgment for weakness or that it would never come. He is patient and **"longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"** (2 Peter 3:9).

The lessons from the foregoing are, one, that God is no respecter of persons; if anyone does His will, He will honor him. Two, He is sovereign and works according to the counsel of His own will (Ephesians 1: 11). No one can question the exercise of God's sovereignty because He is righteous and perfect in all His acts. Three, His election notwithstanding, His judgment is according to truth (Romans 2:2). Four, He will fulfill His word to Abraham

according to the promise of election. Five, His judgment of the of obstinate and mercy on both Jews and Gentiles who respond through repentance from sin and faith in Christ are according to His sovereign will.

God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. And He has chosen to have mercy on everyone who repents of Sin and trusts only Christ’s sacrifice for salvation. Therefore, **“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon”** (Isaiah 55:7).

## DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Mathew	23	Amos	1-2
TUE	“	24	“	3-4
WED	“	25	“	5-6
THUR	“	26	“	7-9
FRI	“	27	Obadiah	1
SAT	“	28	Jonah	1-2
SUN	Mark	1	“	3-4

# 568 Lesson

## ADOPTION OF THE GENTILES

**MEMORY VERSE:** "Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith" (Romans 3:30).

**TEXT: Romans 9:25-33**

**F**rom the call of Abraham and the covenant God instituted with him grew the misconception among the Jews that God's salvation was a corporate exclusive privilege of the Jews. A close examination of that call however reveals that from the onset, the plan and intention of God encompass all of mankind.

**Question 1:** What evidence can be cited from the scripture to show that God's salvation plan encompasses both the Jews and the Gentiles?

God had told Abraham, "**I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed**" (Genesis 12:3). Again, after the trial of Abraham's faith in the matter of his only son, Isaac, God approvingly declared, "**And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice**" (Genesis 22:18). Also, after Abraham's death, God speaking to Isaac as the heir of the divine promise, said, "**And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed**" (Genesis 26:4).

The "**seed**" in reference in these prophetic promises is our Lord Jesus Christ who is also described as the "seed" of the woman (Genesis 3: 15). Besides, when our Lord Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem of Judea, the angel, while announcing the unprecedented event to the shepherds,

expressed its universal import thus: **“Fear not: for, behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people”** (Luke 2:10).

When, therefore, Apostle Paul discussed salvation in the context of it being God’s plan for the Gentiles also, he was perfectly in consonance with the mind of God and the prophecies of scripture.

**THE PARITY OF DIVINE GRACE TO JEWS AND GENTILES** (Roman 9:25; 3:1,2; Leviticus 26:12-16; Romans 3:27; 5:28)

**“As he saith also in Osee, (Greek version of Hosea), I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved”** (Romans 9:25).

Paul, assaying to establish the truth of his teaching, sought support from the scriptures and not from the opinions of philosophers and men of intellectual prowess of his time. The strongest support for any truth is furnished when statement, doctrine or testimony which runs contrary to the Scripture is a self-evident falsehood. **“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them”** (Isaiah 8:20)

The Jews, in promoting their ethnic privileges, could refer to various Old Testament scriptures which conferred on them the privilege of being God’s people. **“And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God”** (Genesis 17:8). Again, **“And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians”** (Exodus 6:7). In conferring this privilege however, God also predicated His relationship with Israel on their obedience to His commandment, **“And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people. But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will**

**not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant: I also will do this unto you;- I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague... And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you" (Leviticus 26:12,14-17).**

Since the basis of God's relationship with Israel was obedience and faith in Him, their disobedience and unbelief translated into the forfeiture of their privileges. The scripture quoted by the apostle from the book of Hosea was just one example of God's historical abandonment of Israel because of her sins. However, the purpose for quoting from Hosea was to show that God could bring back a rejected and abandoned people into His embrace again, In this case, Israel furnished an example, and therefore it should not be thought a strange thing if God should accept into a relationship a people who were once out of His favor, namely, the Gentiles. The ultimate position he sought to establish was that God would constitute His church from both the Jews and the Gentiles. His quotation from Hosea settled a general principle that the way God historically treated Israel in accepting them back after their estrangement, was the same principle on which God was willing to accept the Gentiles at the time of the Gospel.

**Question 2: Explain how Apostle Paul proves that neither the Jews nor the Gentiles could boast themselves in God's salvation.**

The apostle clearly proves that both the Jews and the Gentiles are equal beneficiaries of God's grace of salvation. God's reason for mercy and salvation resides in Himself and not in the merit of any man, Jew or Gentile. If God was willing to re-admit backslidden Israel into relationship and receive the Gentiles who did not seek after the law of righteousness, "**where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith**" (Romans3:27). It is by the principle of divine grace that both Jews and Gentiles are adopted into God's family.

**"And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, ye are not my people; there shall**

**they be called the children of the living God”**(Romans 9:26).

The change from not being God’s people to being called the children of the living God is accomplished in both Jews and Gentiles by grace.

The principle thus established is that God does not reject people on the ground of their past sinfulness but extends His grace even to the vilest sinner. Ultimately therefore, man’s condemnation comes when God’s grace freely offered to him is spurned and rejected.

**PROLONGED GRACE AND ULTIMATE JUSTICE** (Romans 9:27; Isaiah 10:22; 1:9).

**“Esaias** (Greek version of Isaiah) **also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved”** (Romans9:27).

Isaiah was referring to the sinful Jews of his own time, who God was about to judge by sending them as captives into other lands. The general principles which the apostle was laboring to establish is to show that since God rejected the Jews in the past that possibility could not be ruled out in the gospel dispensation. The summary of Isaiah’s prophecy is that although God would still fulfill His promise to Abraham to make his seed numerous, yet only a relatively small proportion of their number shall be saved.

In this way, the apostle established that his doctrine of possible rejection of the Jews was not in conflict with history. The Jews of his own time might expect similar judgment based on precedence established in the scripture.

**“For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness; because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth”** (Romans 9:28).

A paraphrase of the above scripture quoted also from Isaiah 10:22 is that God will speedily execute the judgment He had determined against Israel and this will be done in justice and righteousness as a manifestation of His abhorrence of

sin. God's judgment does not tarry for ever because of His justice. His judgment, when it finally arrives is severe but done in righteousness. In the case of Israel, the Scripture quoted from Isaiah 1:9 paints a picture of an Israel so comparable with Sodom and Gomorrah that it was indeed an act of God's grace that even a remnant was spared.

The whole purpose for which the apostle introduces and concludes this argument is to show that God destroyed many of the Jews for their sins though they were Abraham's children. Therefore, the explanation on rejection of the Jews from the privileges of children of God for unbelief is clear.

**Question 3: How does Apostle Paul's argument concerning the rejection of the Jews serve as a warning to people in the church today?**

The present church age is characterized by gross lukewarmness arising from the influence of a godless culture of the world. Nonetheless, God's grace can preserve any sincere and prayerful believer from the rot in the world. On the other hand, God will certainly judge in righteousness, beginning from His house (1 Peter 4: 17).

**PREREQUISITE OF FAITH FOR JUSTIFICATION**  
(Romans 9:30-33; Genesis 15:6; Galatians 3:19; 3:7,8)

**"What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness"** (Romans 9:30,31).

In summing up his argument, the apostle now touches upon a fundamental doctrine of justification by faith. Placing the Gentiles in contrast with the Jews, he highlighted the Gentiles' past spiritual indifference and total lack of interest in righteousness. The question the apostle sought to answer was why, in spite of their unrighteousness and impiety, did the Gentiles stand on the same platform with a vast majority of the Jews?



The reason is that while the Gentiles did not care about righteousness at all, the Jews pursued righteousness on the wrong angle.

**Question 4: Explain why Israel did not attain unto righteousness even though they sought it through the law.**

In order to understand Israel's failure to attain God's righteousness, it is necessary to go back to the Abrahamic covenant with God. It is important to understand that God had already, before the giving of the Mosaic law, justified Abraham. His justification was not on the basis of keeping the then non-existent law, but on his faith in God. "**And he (Abraham) believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness**" (Genesis 15:6). It was only his faith in God that conferred righteousness on him. The New Testament concludes from this that only "**they which are {similarly} of faith, the same are the {true} children of Abraham**" (Galatians 3:7) as far as justification by God is concerned. Just as God intended that Abraham and his children would be justified by their faith in Him, so also has He granted justification to the Gentiles by faith in the gospel (Galatians 3:8).

The Abrahamic covenant of which the Jews were very proud and whose benefits they were quick to claim was actually a faith-based covenant. Abraham's part in the covenant was to continue in faith and uprightness. When, later, the law was given at Sinai, it was intended to show to sinful man his sinfulness and moral weakness. Having seen his own moral destitution, his humbled sinful heart would be willing to look outside of himself for salvation from sin. It is for this reason that the scripture says, "**Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith**" (Galatians 3:24).

**Question 5: How does the idea that a man can be justified on the last day by his good works and personal righteousness stand in the light of God's adoption of the Gentiles?**

**"That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even**

**the righteousness which is of faith”** shows that by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. It is clear that to be saved by works, a man must live perfectly in compliance with the whole law without a single infraction. Besides, he must also devise a way to rectify his inbred depraved nature. These are obviously unattainable by any mortal. Man is saved only by faith in the perfect sacrifice, of a perfect Savior. Nothing less than the blood of Jesus Christ can atone for man’s sin and grant him justification before the thrice holy God.

## DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Mark	2-3	Micah	1-2
TUE	“	4	“	3-5
WED	“	5	“	6-7
THUR	“	6	Nahum	1-3
FRI	“	7	Habakkak	1-2
SAT	“	8	“	2
SUN	“	9	Zephaniah	1-2

# 569 Lesson

## RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH

**MEMORY VERSE:** “And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Phillipians 3:9).

**TEXT: Romans 10:1-21**

The book of Romans has been rightly described as the “Constitution and Bill of Right” of the Christian faith. The key word in the book is righteousness. In our text, the subject of righteousness by faith is still the focus, but it is viewed in contrast to the righteousness which is of the law (chapter 10:3-5). The Jews, being ignorant of how God makes people righteous through faith in Christ, were trying to establish their own righteousness before God through keeping of the law.

Even today, there are many sincere but misguided religious people who do not have or know how to obtain righteousness by faith. They are busy trying to have a right standing with God on the basis of their own human goodness or performance of religious duties such as giving of alms, paying tithes, going on pilgrimage to a holy land, and such countless activities. This study corrects such misguided zeal and blind ignorance to God’s own way of making people righteous. It also challenges believers who already have God’s own righteousness to spread the good news and intercede for those who are yet to enjoy this glorious provision of God.

**Question 1: Mention the two kinds of righteousness stated in our text.**

**THE NECESSITY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH**  
(Romans 10: 1-4; 3: 10, 19-23; Deuteronomy 27:26; Galatians 3: 10; Isaiah 64:6; Philippians 3:9)

Apostle Paul here revealed his heart's desire for the Jewish people, his kinsmen. Having been in their shoes in the past, he understood their plight and felt for them. He knew how zealous he was in Judaism and how he tried in vain to obtain righteousness by works.

His understanding of Israel's spiritual condition made him to pray for their salvation. The Israelites were ignorant of God's provision for righteousness by faith. They were also ignorant of the fact that by the deeds of the law, no person can be justified or made righteous before God. The path of righteousness by works which Israel pursued was a dead end because they could not fulfill the law as required by God. To be made righteous by works of the law, a person must keep all the Mosaic laws without a slip in any single point, and that must be done continuously without interruption throughout one's lifetime. **"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all"** James 2: 10). Obviously, this is an impossible demand from fallen men because no one of Adam's race except Jesus Christ, could ever fulfill this demand of the law.

Trying to establish one's own righteousness according to the works of Mosaic law brings a person under a curse since the covenant of righteousness by works stipulates that **"cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen"** (Deuteronomy 27:26). Paul the apostle emphasized this fact in his epistle to the Galatians (Galatians 3:10).

**Question 2: Why is righteousness by faith a necessity for all men?**

It is not only the Jews that need the provision of righteousness by faith but the entire human race. After the Fall, man became enslaved to sin and Satan. Adam and Eve were banished from the garden and they lost their good standing with God. Since that tragic fall, every seed of Adam could not measure up to God's standard of righteousness simply because they lost the nature of God. No matter how hard they tried they would always fall short of God's perfect standard. Though men may applaud our

efforts at keeping the law or we may commend ourselves for being morally perfect, when measured against the standard of God's holy character, it would be seen that **"all our righteousness are as filthy rags"** in God's sight (Isaiah 64:6). It is for this reason Paul counted his own righteousness which is according to the law a worthless thing and desired that he would be found in Christ, **"not having (his) own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith"** (Philippians 3:9). This righteousness of God which comes by faith in Christ is what the Jews rejected and would rather insist on their own personal righteousness. However, believers need a better righteousness than that of the Scribes and Pharisees. Jesus said, **"except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."** (Mathew 5:20).

God's provision of righteousness is in Christ. Jesus Christ has been **"made unto us righteousness"** and He is.

**THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS"** (1 Corinthians 1:30; Jeremiah 23:5,6).

It is only through faith in Him that a person can be declared and made righteous by God. The righteousness obtained by faith in Christ is two-fold: imputed righteousness and imparted righteousness. By trusting Christ, a believer has God's righteousness imputed into his account and he is now justified. This imputation or reckoning of righteousness into one's account can be seen in God's dealing with Abraham when he believed God. He counted Abraham's faith as righteousness just as He will count our faith as righteousness if we believe (Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3-5, 22-25; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23). Imputed righteousness is like a garment placed on a person, covering his own inadequacies and giving him a right standing with God. The result of this is that God sees him in a new light, his sins are pardoned, he has peace with God, and no more condemnation for his. But beyond the imputed righteousness which only relates to the believers' standing in grace, faith in Christ also brings

the impartation of power to live a righteous life. Apostle Paul puts it succinctly in his epistle to Titus **"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world"** (Titus 2:11,12).

**Question 3: How can a person receive God's gift of righteousness?**

The concept of imputed righteousness to believer's account or the impartation of righteousness to him should not sound strange. The sin of Adam was imputed to the entire human race (Roman 5: 12), And there is no doubt that the moment Adam obeyed Satan, there was an impartation of Satan's nature into him. Another example of imputation is that the sins of mankind were imputed to Christ as He became our substitute on the cross, **"All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way: and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all"** (Isaiah 53:6). Jesus Christ, who knew no sin was made to be sin for us; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). Our sins were imputed to Him so that His righteousness could be imputed to us; our aprons of sin were laid on Him so that His coat of righteousness could cover our nakedness.

**THE SIMPLICITY OF GOD'S SALVATION** (Romans 10:6-13; Isaiah 46: 12, 13; Acts 16:29-34; 8:37; 3: 19; 2:38)

Having shown the ignorance of the Jews concerning God's own righteousness, apostle Paul pointed out the simplicity of God's method of saving people and making them righteous. This is to prove that the reason the Israelites are not saved is not because it is too difficult to find the way of salvation but that they miss it because of their deliberate disobedience.

God had earlier spoken to them through prophet Isaiah that He would bring His righteousness near unto them. **"Hearken unto me, ye stoutheated, that are far from righteousness: I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory"** (Isaiah 46:12,

13). This was fulfilled when Jesus Christ came to fulfill all the requirements of the law. Then, He became the **“end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth”**. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus brought God's righteousness near and His salvation came within reach of everyone who believes. So, God's righteousness is so near and one does not need self- exertion to obtain it. All a person needs to do is exercise sincere faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. Genuine saving faith will make a person to call on the Lord in true repentance and trust in His person. **“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”** (Romans 10:13).

**Question 4: Point out the major contrast between righteousness by works and righteousness by faith.**

Concerning the righteousness according to work, Moses told the Israelites that God's commandments were plain and straight forward. **“For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it”** (Deuteronomy 30: 11-14). Paul the apostle, alluding to the same principle, applied it to the simplicity of faith and righteousness through Christ. Quoting the same passage, he pointed out that the language of righteousness by faith is **“believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved”**. The basic difference between the covenant of righteousness by works and that of righteousness by faith is that the former depends on human merit and effort to do good, whereas the latter is based on faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ at Calvary.

**Question 5: What does it mean to confess the Lord Jesus and to believe in one's heart?**

It is very simple for a sinner to be saved and declared righteousness before God. The sinner must confess with his mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in his heart that He died for his sins. This is not a reference to confession of sin or a mere profession of faith in Christ, but an open confession that Jesus is whom the Father says He is. To confess Jesus is to accept that He is the Son of God, the Savior and Lord. Jesus made this point clear when He said: "**whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven**" (Mathew 10:32). To confess Christ therefore is to own Him as Savior and Lord. In practical terms, the Ethiopian eunuch confessed Jesus when Philip told him the condition for water baptism (Acts 8:37).

To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ is the condition for salvation. It simply means to trust Him for salvation. It means to abandon one's own rebellion or self-righteousness and accept God's gift of righteousness through Christ. This was demonstrated by the Philippian jailer who asked "**sirs, what must I do to be saved?**" **Paul and Silas told him, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house"**. The faith of the jailer was a saving faith which produced an evidence of a changed heart. The truth is, if a person has genuine saving faith, he will turn from his sinful ways and live a righteous life, not by trying to keep the law but by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**THE RESPONSIBILITY OF BELIEVERS FOR SINNERS' SALVATION** (Romans 10;1, 14-21; Mark 16;15,16,20; Matthew 28; 18-20; 2 Corinthians 5;20; Isaiah 62; 1,6,7)

The concern of Paul the apostle for the salvation of his Jewish kinsmen re-echoes the challenge of the Great Commission. Jesus commanded His followers "**to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature**" (Mark 16; 15).

In fulfillment of this commission, apostle Paul was an outstanding example. He had a great burden for the unsaved Jews and he was even prepared to be cut off from Christ if that would translate to their salvation (Romans



9: 1-3). He risked his life by going to preach among them so that they could accept God's righteousness. As a last resort, Paul continued in prayer to God for them that they might be saved.

**Question 6: What are the responsibilities of believers to the unsaved?**

Paul's concern and burden for the lost should be the attitude of all believers in Christ. It is the responsibility of Christians to reach out to lost sinners and seek to bring them to faith in Christ. Obviously, sinners cannot believe in Christ unless they first hear the gospel. It is the responsibility of believers to preach the gospel to sinners and give them opportunity to make intelligent decisions either for or against Christ. It is also important that Christians pray for sinners. It is instructive that though the Jews were rebellious, Paul still prayed for them.

**Question 7: Why must believers continue to pray for and preach to sinners?**

The combined weapons of evangelism and ceaseless intercession are necessary to snatch obstinate sinners from the kingdom of Satan. Hearts that are already hardened by religious indoctrination and eyes that are blinded by the devil can only be softened or opened by the power of God. It is as believers intercede for such people that God's power is released to touch them. There is hope for the lost to be saved if believers do not despair on them and give up.

Of course, not everyone will believe our gospel message but that is their own decision and responsibility, not our's. Therefore, as believers, we should not give up on any sinner. We must preach and pray, believing that the Holy spirit will use our preaching and intercession to bring them into God's waiting hands.

## DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Mark	10	Zephaniah	3
TUE	"	11	Haggai	1-3
WED	"	12	Zechariah	1-2
THUR	"	13	"	3-4
FRI	"	14	"	5-6
SAT	"	15	"	7-8
SUN	2 Cor.	16	"	9-10

## END OF NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

## BEGINNING OF SPECIAL STUDIES

# 570 Lesson

## REPENTANCE

**MEMORY VERSE:** "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)

**TEXT:** Matthew 4:17; Luke 13:3,5; 24:47; Revelation 3:19,20

The Christian life is not a game of chance. The Bible has given us enough light" on how to establish relationship with God and live an acceptable life. Though Christ, through His death and resurrection has procured salvation for mankind, there are definite steps to obtaining the blessing. There is no hope of salvation for anyone who blindly practices religion without taking heed to the precepts in God's word. The message of repentance is one of the timeless truths that is fundamental to the Christian life on earth and hope of living with God in heaven. This divine demand of repentance cuts across dispensations. Christ's emphasis on this truth resonates throughout His ministry on earth and after His glorification as our texts reveal. The inference is, there must be a definite day and time when a sinner consciously decides to turn away from sin and forsake them, receive and follow Christ as Lord and Savior.

**REPENTANCE: ITS MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE**  
(Matthew 12:41; Jonah 3:8-10; Proverbs 28:13; Ezekiel 18:30; 14:6; 1 Samuel 7:3; Acts 26:20)

**Question 1: What is repentance?**

Repentance is turning away from all known sin, changing one's mind, purpose and action from that which is evil. It is a conscious turning away from sin, disobedience, evil or idolatry. It also means to turn from Satan unto the living God. Repentance elicits a form of godly sorrow which

makes an erstwhile sinner regard sin with utter revulsion. Godly sorrow makes the sinner or backslider to turn away from sin.

Repentance is the genesis of the process of salvation of sinners and restoration for backsliders. It differs from tearful remorse which is merely an expression of sorrow over an embarrassing outcome of sin. Godly sorrow, on the other hand, is associated with repentance: the sinner is brought face to face with the reality that he has offended God. Convicted, the sinner manifests sorrow for his sins and abhors the sinful practices. As he repents of them, he receives pardon from God through faith in Christ. "**For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death**" (2 Corinthians 7: 10).

Repentance is the central theme of the gospel. The doctrine and teaching of repentance is fundamental to the propagation of the gospel. It is the foundational stone of the New Testament teachings. The place of repentance in Scripture, particularly in the New Testament, is underscored by the regularity of its usage. "Repentance", "repent" or "repenting" occurs over sixty times in the New Testament.

<b>Question 2: Why is everyone required to repent of sin?</b>
---

Repentance is a universal command by God to all people (Ezekiel 14:6; 18:30; Acts 17:30,31). As such, it occupies an important place in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. At the beginning of His ministry, He preached repentance (Matthew 4: 17). He repeatedly emphasized that His mission was to call sinners to repentance (Matthew 9: 13; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:32; Acts 3:18,19,26; 11:18). Also, John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Lord anchored his messages in the wilderness on repentance (Luke 3:3-8).

The importance of repentance cannot be overemphasized as Christ's valedictory message to His disciples shortly before He was taken to heaven was hinged upon repentance (Luke 24:45-47). That Christ still admonished the backslidden churches in Asia Minor from His exalted

position in glory to repent attests to the timelessness of this doctrine (Revelation 2:4,5; 3:3,19). No one can obtain salvation, relate with God on earth and live with Him in eternity without repentance from all sin.

The message of repentance was not only the cornerstone of Christ preaching but also the sum and substance of the apostles' evangelistic messages. Paul, preaching to the Athenians stated that God "...**commanded all men every where to repent**" (Acts 17:30). In his message to the Jews and Gentiles, he also emphasized "**repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ**" (Acts 20:21). Peter, in his second epistle, stressed that, "**The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance**" (2 Peter 3:9). God does not delight in judging sinners because of His love and the sacrifice of His Son for the redemption of humanity. This however should not be taken for granted as His purpose for patience and expectation is that all men should repent from their sins.

As important as the subject of repentance is, it not possible without the help of the Holy Spirit who produces conviction in the heart of the sinner. Salvation, the greatest miracle that can ever take place in the life of a sinner, is wholly by grace. It is a gift which he could never have earned were he to work for it. Self-righteousness or morals cannot earn the sinner forgiveness, salvation or acceptance in the presence of God. "**For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God**" (Ephesians 2:8).

**EVIDENCE OF GENUINE REPENTANCE** (Jonah 3:5-10; 2 Corinthians 7:10, 11; Psalm 38:18; 51:17 Romans 19:9,10; 2 Samuel 12:13; Genesis 20: 1-18; Acts 24:16; Exodus 22:1-15)

**Question 3: What are the proofs of genuine repentance?**

No sinner can be said to have repented who treats sin with levity. True repentance manifests in an attitude of disdain and hatred for sin as shown by the people in

Nineveh who turned from their evil way to God. No sinner or backslider can be said to have genuinely repented if he still condones sin. Those who claim to have repented of their sins but still manifest hatred, bitterness, envy, pride, greed, immorality, etc. are not sincere. Identifying with a popular church or observing religious rites does not solve the problem of sin. One can be an active member of a renowned, large congregation without possessing a renewed, regenerated nature. Until a sinner repents, he or she is outside the kingdom of God.

Where there is genuine repentance, the penitent must confess his sins to the Lord. Having repented truly, the power of God brings a definite change into his life so he can begin the new life. It is faith in Christ's sacrifice and resurrection that brings God's power to bear in the life of the penitent. **"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). Everyone seeking God's salvation must rely on the unfailing mercy and love of Christ who paid the supreme price for our redemption, All who hope to be saved must trust in the finished work of Christ at Calvary, stand upon God's word and receive salvation as a gift of His love.

Though the erstwhile sinner has received salvation evidenced by the peace and joy in his heart, he or she needs to follow it up with restitution in order to be completely free from condemnation, Thus, restitution, the act of correcting past wrongs in order to have a conscience void of offence toward God and man, is a practical aspect of repentance. God expects the repentant sinner or backslider to correct every wrong committed against others. Restitution is incontrovertibly an integral part of true repentance.

**RESULTS OF GENUINE REPENTANCE** (Isaiah 55:7; Proverbs :28:13; Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; 3:19; John 1:12,13; Romans 8:1;2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Luke 15,10,11-24)

**Question 4: What are the benefits of genuine repentance?**

Through repentance, the natural man who had been estranged from God is reconciled back to Him. His past records of rebellion and self-will are blotted out by divine mercy. There will also be a fundamental change of direction and destiny from hell toward heaven.

Repentance opens the fountain of God's grace and abundant blessings upon the penitent. It provides pardon and remission of sins. Through it, sinners receive justification and acceptance. He or she is saved to inherit all other blessings that Christ has procured for us through His sacrifice at Calvary. Repentance is God's expectation from everyone. And there is always joy in heaven when a sinner repents.

**DAILY BIBLE READING**

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Luke	1	Zechariah	11-12
TUE	"	2	"	13-14
WED	"	3	Melachi	1-2
THUR	"	4	"	3-4
FRI	"	5	Genesis	1-2
SAT	"	6	"	3-4
SUN	"	7	"	5-6

# 571 Lesson

## THE NEW BIRTH

**MEMORY VERSE:** “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).

**TEXT: John 3:1-7**

The Bible doctrine of the new birth is important and pivotal as far as Christian experiences are concerned. Jesus underscored the importance of this experience when He said: “**Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God**” (John 3:3).

The new birth is the gateway into the kingdom of God and other Christian experiences. It is indispensable for everyone who seeks to enter the kingdom of God. In God’s economy, all those who will get into the blessings of the kingdom must first have the new birth experience.

**Question 1: Why is the new birth an indispensable Christian experience?**

The importance of this experience cannot be overstressed. The new birth is the beginning of a life-long experience of walking with Christ. Of all the experiences that a natural man can have, the new birth is the most glorious. Without it, the spiritual life cannot be enjoyed.

Nicodemus, a man of high social and religious standing in Israel, marvelled at the message and necessity of the new birth. This shows that salvation cannot be obtained through participation in religious activities, memorizing the doctrines of the Bible and trying to be morally good. An inward change wrought by the Holy Spirit is the only means that makes the new birth possible.

There are those who believe that they are saved because they have godly parents. Others bask in being raised in



a Bible-believing church. Yet, some people hold to "good works" as their hope of salvation. All who want to make heaven their eternal abode should realize that apart from Christ, every other ground is "sinking sand."

**A RULER AND HIS PROFESSION** (John 3: 1,2; 7:50-53; 19:39; Acts 26:24-29).

Our text reveals a ruler of the Jews "**named Nicodemus**" (verse 1). Nicodemus was not just a Pharisee, he was a Sanhedrin. He belonged to the highest ruling group. As a Pharisee, he was learned in the Mosaic laws. He was a defender of the law and will not want the laws to be broken (John 7:50,51). This prominent religious leader of the Jews came to Jesus by night. He had an issue bothering his mind. As a Pharisee and a ruler, he was not bold enough to come to Jesus within the public glare. He could not stay away either because he felt there was something uncommon about Jesus.

**Question 2: Why are many people reluctant today to surrender their lives to Christ?**

In his confession, Nicodemus declared Jesus as Master (Rabbi); that He is a Teacher come from God and an extraordinary miracle worker with God's backing. He acknowledged the great and unusual ministry of Christ. His encounter with Him was not like those of other Pharisees and Jewish leaders who were looking for ways to ensnare Him. Nicodemus was sincerely concerned for his soul and was convinced that Christ could show him the way into the kingdom of God. Convinced that something was missing in his life, though he was religious, he came to Christ to know the truth. How eternally rewarding if people would cast aside their religious garb and descend from their lofty positions to seek the most important experience in life!

**THE INDISPENSABLE QUALIFICATION FOR ENTRY INTO GOD'S KINGDOM** (John 3:3,5-8).

As Nicodemus spoke of Christ's greatness, Jesus answered, "**Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God**" (verse 3).

Jesus was unequivocal in revealing that there is an experience which qualifies one for the kingdom of God. This experience is variously called the new birth, salvation, regeneration, being born again, justification, conversion, redemption, etc.

To be born again is to become a new creature in Christ. It is a change or transformation that comes through the renewing of the mind by faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ. John Wesley describes the new birth as "that great change which God works in the soul when He brings it into life; when He raises it from the death of sin to life of righteousness. It is the change wrought in the whole soul by the almighty Spirit of God when it is created anew in Christ Jesus; when it is 'renewed after the image of God, righteousness and true holiness. Then the love of the World is changed into the love of God; pride into humility, aggression into meekness, hatred, envy, malice into a sincere, tender love for mankind. It is that change whereby the early, sensual, devilish mind is turned into a Christ-like mind".

**Question 3: Describe, in your own words, the new birth experience.**

Man was created by God in His own image and likeness. God is holy and righteous and so man originally was holy and righteous. Then sin came and man became depraved. He was left without any capacity to do good. From Adam's *fall*, *all* that are born inherited the sin nature. Indeed, after the *fall*, "there is none righteous, no, not one." All are qualified for hell. Therefore, everyone born into the *world* must be born the second time if they are going to be delivered from the nature and power of sin. The new birth experience is not optional for all who desire to enter into heaven.

**Question 4: Mention some religious activities that people often mistake for the new birth experience**

There are activities that do not qualify as substitutes for the new birth experience. Example of these are regular church attendance, being a worker or leader in the church, ability to recite large portions of the Bible, being a moralist

and a keeper of the law, observing the ordinances of water baptism, Lord's Supper, and such like. No religious activity can take the place of the new birth. Religious pilgrimages and other rituals or ceremonies will not do.

**Question 5: What does it mean to be born of water and of the Spirit?**

It is noteworthy that Jesus said the new birth is by Water and the spirit (John 3:4,5; Ephesians 5:26; 1 Peter 1:23; John 15:3; Titus 3:5). The word of God is compared to water that cleanses because it washes away sin. As the Word of God is proclaimed, the sinner and the self-righteous see the need to repent and trust the word for forgiveness and cleansing. Jesus said, **“ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you”** (John 15:3).

Also, the Spirit of God is indispensable in the work of regeneration. There can be no transformation except there is a renewing of the mind by the spirit of God. The Holy spirit is One that reproves of sin, righteousness and judgement (John 16:8). The natural man cannot change himself. The Spirit brings conviction as one hears the word, leading to repentance and conversion.

**COMPARISON AND CONTRAST BETWEEN THE TWO BIRTHS** (John 3:6-10; Ephesians 4:17,18; Romans 9:6,8; Mark 12:32-34; Acts 17:23-25; Isaiah 48:8; Acts 28:27; John 3:6; Galatians 5:19-23 John 1:12,13; Job 14:1; 15:14; Colossians 1:13,14; John 6:37; Psalm 51:5; 2 Peter 1:3,4)

**“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit is Spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again”**(John 3:6,7).

The Lord compares the similarities and differences between natural and spiritual birth. Although a baby exists in its mother's womb, it is not counted as part of the family before it is born into the world. So it is with spiritual birth. You may be interested in the Word of God; you may fellowship in a gospel church but you are not regarded by God as part of His family, until you are born again .

Secondly, an unborn child is completely in darkness. Even though it may be breathing in the mother's womb, it does not see the sun and everything around us. It has eyes, but it cannot see with them. So are sinners or the unregenerate. They may have physical eyes but they *are* blind spiritually. Again, the unborn baby dwells in total darkness even though it might be deriving some nourishments from the mother. The same is true of anyone who is not born again: he may enjoy some provisions and protection from God but he is still in darkness spiritually.

Thirdly, an unborn baby seems to be very near yet very *far*, Its conception may bring joy into the hearts of other members of the family. Older siblings may rejoice and expect to have someone added to the family. But it is difficult to predict its future.

Fourthly an unborn baby derives sustenance from its mother, yet it does not know her; the mother is the unknown personality supplying all its needs. Although, the Lord gives the sinner light, food, rain, etc., yet he does not know Him as Father.

As there are similarities, so there are also contrasts. The natural man is ruled and controlled by the dictates of the flesh. But to be born of the Spirit is to experience transformation and live by the Holy Spirit. Two, when you are born of the flesh, you are born of the will of man. But when you become born again, you are born by the Spirit of God.

Three, natural birth brings you into the world of sin. Spiritual birth takes you away from the world of sin into the kingdom of God. Four, natural birth takes place without your personal decision. But spiritual birth needs a personal decision from you. Five, when you are born of the flesh, you possess the depraved, human nature but when you are born of God, you possess the divine nature.

**Question 6: Compare and contrast the natural with the spiritual birth.**

**STEPS TO THE NEW BIRTH** (Romans 3:23; Luke 18:10  
14; Mark 1:15;1 John 1;9; Romans 10:4-10).

**Question 7: What are the steps to the new birth experience and its evidence?**

First, acknowledge your sinful state because all have sinned (Romans 3:23) Excusing our sin will not do. We must agree with God that we are sinners. Second, repent of all sin. True repentance leads us to confess and forsake all known sins (Mark 1:15; proverbs 28:13).

Third, recognise the need for a Savior. No man can save himself. All our acts of righteousness are filthy rags in the sight of God. Fourth, believe that Jesus died for your Sin. Anything besides the blood of Christ cannot atone for sin (John 3:16).

Fifth invite Jesus into your life as personal Savior and Lord. Jesus will not save you against your will. He will not save you by force. He stands at the door of your heart knocking and waiting for you to let Him into your heart (Revelation 3:20).

Sixth, believe that your sins are forgiven and you are born again (John 1:12). All those who truly repent and receive Christ become new creatures.

Many people have been unable to experience this great blessing because they think their money, water baptism or tears will buy the experience for them. Others think their sins are too great that they cannot be so easily forgiven. The truth is, God will not accept any other means of salvation since Christ has died for your sins. God counts sin as sin, whether big or small. Believe in His love for you and His faithfulness to forgive as He has promised you . God is not a man: He forgives sins repented of.

Marks of the new birth are clearly outlined in the Scriptures (2 Corinthians 5:17; Philippians 1:11; Galatians 5:22,23; 1 John 3:9 Ephesians 4:23-32).

When this miracle happens in our lives, we will know It. Heaven also knows because the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are involved. Our neighbors, family members will know by the fruits we bear. Jesus said: **“by their fruits, ye shall know them.”** When a person is born again, he begins to hate the sins he used to like before. His language, dress code, relationship etc. will change. Old things will pass away. All lying stealing, drinking, smoking, cheating, partying, will become a thing of the past.

The new birth experience is real and glorious. It is the gateway to inexhaustible divine blessings on earth and in heaven.

### DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Luke	8	Genesis	7-8
TUE	“	9	“	9-10
WED	“	10	“	11-12
THUR	“	11	“	13-14
FRI	“	12	“	15-16
SAT	“	13	“	17-18
SUN	“	14	“	19

# 572 Lesson

## FELLOWSHIP AMONG THE BRETHREN

**MEMORY VERSE:** "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7)

**TEXT: 1 John 1:1-7; Psalm 133:1-3**

The Scripture accords fellowship a prominent treatment in its teachings. A Christian needs not travel too far through the Bible before realizing God's expectation and call to a holy, sincere, vibrant and fruitful fellowship among His children. The beauty of the Christian life and the joy it promotes manifest when fellowship is devoid of hypocrisy, duplicity and carnality. The Lord expects true Christians to relate with one another as a united family full of love and good works.

Nature itself teaches us that great benefits abound in fellowship. Even birds of a feather, flock together. Man continually craves affection and friendship. His disposition desires the relationship of another, for love and association. No individual enjoys solitude or loneliness for a long time, no matter how well-gifted or endowed. Isolation limits and destroys our potentials. A lone ranger soon burns out for lack of companionship and care. Togetherness is therefore the key to victory and preservation of the Church.

### **METAPHORS AND ELEMENTS OF FELLOWSHIP**

(Romans 12:4,5; I Corinthians 10: 17; John 15:2,5; Acts 2:44; Ephesians 4:4-6; Acts 10:28; Romans 12: 13; 2 Corinthians 8:4; 1 Timothy 6: 18; Hebrews 13: 16; Romans 15,26,27)

The Scripture uses a number of metaphors to describe the Church. One, she is likened to the human body. The natural body is composed of related and interdependent members. Each member's role is vital to the general well-being of the body. When they cooperate in mutual

harmony there is peace, satisfaction, growth and health. The members relate together to give purpose and meaning to the existence of the body. The same applies to the body of Christ. Christians are not supposed to be unrelated units; they are members compacted together to form a healthy whole. If the members are not united, they will not fulfill the purpose for which they are placed in the body and will not realize their greatest potentials.

Two, the Church is likened to the branches in a vine. Attachment and fellowship of the branches with the vine leads to fruitfulness. Three, as a building of God, cohesiveness of the blocks keeps the building in shape and prevents disintegration. Four, as a household, love forgiveness and fellowship strengthen the household and ensure it does not break apart.

The term ‘fellowship’ or its cognates is translated from the Greek word ‘koinonia’ mutual communication, association, sharing a common interest or ideal and being united together by the same cause. The Scripture designates the acts of fellowship among the early Christians as those expressed in an atmosphere of oneness, sincerity and love. **“And all that believed were together, and had all things common”** (Acts 2:44).

**Question 1: Describe the nature of the relationship God expects from His children.**

The nature of fellowship lies in unity. Writing to the believers in Corinth, the apostle Paul enjoins them to **“speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment”** (1 Corinthians 1:10). Fellowship finds expression and essence in a united group of people. Without oneness in purpose, faith and pursuit, fellowship would be practically impossible. Christians are to live together as a family bound by love and brotherhood.

**Question 2: What are the elements of fellowship?**

Fellowship is about communion. There is a community (of believers) and in that community there is communion.



This community comprises people of same (religious) beliefs. They mind the same things, believe the same doctrines based on the whole counsel of God, submit to the same Lord, confess the same faith and are controlled by the same spirit (Ephesians 4:4-6).

Second, fellowship is about *companionship*, friendship and partnership. A companion is one that stays by, spends time with and shares in the joy or sadness of another (Acts 10:28).

Third, it is about *communication* or distribution to the saints (Romans 12:13). It is about ministering to the needs of one another (2 Corinthians 8:4; 1 Timothy 6:18; Hebrews 13:16).

Fourth, fellowship is about *contribution*. Sometimes, it becomes necessary to contribute to meet the needs of the saints. To this collection, Paul attached so much importance as a witness to the spirit of fellowship which the gospel inspires in all hearts alike (Romans 15:26,27).

Fifth, fellowship is about *cooperation*. The work of the Kingdom requires cooperation. Service to the body of Christ demands enormous efforts and none can do it alone. Power lies in our unity and cooperating together (compare 1 Corinthians 1:10 with chapter 3:1-9).

**THE BASIS OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP** (1 John 1:1-3; Acts 2:41,42; John 8:12; Galatians 2:7-9)

Fellowship does not occur in a vacuum. It is an act that engages the believer's spirit, soul and body . Some think that who you are, where you go and what you believe does not matter in fellowship: that you can always remain in fellowship with God and His children. Paul said: **“But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils”** (1 Corinthians 10:20,21). The believer is called to a holy, healthy and heavenly convocation.

Christian fellowship is based on our relationship with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. When relationship is established with God, it leads to fellowship with one another.

Salvation is the basic experience that brings us into fellowship with God. It is the gateway into God's presence. We cannot fellowship with Him except we are redeemed and adopted into His kingdom (Acts 2:41,42). This experience is personal to every Christian and cannot be a corporate affair.

**Question 3: What is the condition of fellowship between God and man?**

There cannot be true fellowship without Christ and the Spirit of Christ in His children. Christ is the origin of every expression of true fellowship. He is the center Who holds all the Christians together. He is the reference point and the hubs around which our faith revolves. Those who do not know the Lord have no business in the fellowship of true Christians.

Sinners are dead in trespasses. The motions of sin would not allow them submit to the demands of true fellowship until the sinner forsakes his ways through the cleansing blood of Jesus, he cannot profit from the fellowship of believers (1 Corinthians 1:9)

Sinners belong to the world of darkness while believers are children of light. Their walk tends towards darkness as darkness and light cannot co-exist, no more can saints and sinners fellowship together. To walk in darkness, is to live and act against the foundation of the gospel. There is no truth in their profession: their practices breed folly and falsehood.

Only the Son of God can procure for man sacred influences by which sin is removed, leaving in him a holy affection suitable for fellowship. The Scripture describes the nature of the works of darkness thus; **"But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints. Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient,**

**but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God**"(Ephesians 5:35).

It may also be the darkness of demonism, syncretism, or of worldliness. The believer is to **"have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them"**(Ephesians 5:11)

The result of walking in the light is a life cleansed from sin and brought into conformity with Christ. Knowledge of the Word makes us to see sin in its miserable awfulness. We loathe the things we once enjoyed. If a man claims to have fellowship with God but lives a life untouched by the light; he deceives himself. **"Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life"** (John 8: 12).

**BARRIERS TO CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP** (1 John 1:4-6; 1 Corinthians 1: 10; 5: 1-13; 2 Corinthians 6: 14-17: Romans 12:16; 14:19; 1 Peter 5:5).

The refreshing waters of fellowship, the streams of its joys and the fragrance of its roses can easily be destroyed by sin and its subsidiaries. Sin is a poison that spares none of its captives; its venom defiles and despoils. Sin severed Adam's fellowship and communion with God and altered the course of nature. Time has not changed sin's ruinous tendencies. Whoever allows it would pay dearly in due course. A time would come when sin will deliver its wages to those who have faithfully served it. And, it will do that with utmost cruelty. A congregation that permits sin risks God's frown instead of fellowship. They will be denied the favor of His presence. Sin will erect a huge barrier between them and their blessing, and will weaken their bond and tie of love in Christ. Those who allow sin have willingly opened the door for the enemy and his agents. Believers in Christ must be careful of who their soul-mates are and those they associate with (2 Corinthians 6: 14,15).

**Question 4: Enumerate the things that constitute hindrances to fellowship? How can a believer maintain an unbroken relationship with God?**

Apart from sin, another barrier is *self*. Anyone, conscious of his personality, beauty, ego or family background cannot fit freely into the congregation of believers (Luke 22:24). Third, *status* or *position*. God, in His wisdom, has put us on different pedestals in the society and in the church. He placed some in positions of authority and power and others to do lesser assignments. This arrangement is not meant to divide us or drive a wedge of discrimination in our relationship in the church (3 John 9,10). Fourth, *suspicion and lack of confidence*. Where trust and confidence are constantly betrayed, it will affect us.

Fifth, *tribalism* or *tribal differences*. When people are conscious of tribal superiority or inferiority, there is problem. We should remember that we are created by the same God, redeemed and ransomed by the same blood. **"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus"** (Galatians 3:28). We should not create divisions that do not exist.

Sixth, *pride*. This is that undue self-esteem which has no room or respect for others. It is a state of high opinion of oneself or one's achievement and a feeling of one's worth. Seventh, *discord and disharmony*. When the seed of discord is sown among a people, it affects their relationship in a negative way.

Other barriers are: idolatry and witchcraft, hypocrisy and deceit, false accusation and fault-finding, envy and jealousy, backbiting and gossip.

We must deal with these barriers to pave way for God's ever-blessed visitation. Let us remember that Christ condescended and humbled Himself to death for our sake (Romans 12:16; 14:19; I Peter 5:5).

**Question 5: How can we overcome the barriers that affect our fellowship with God and man?**

## **BENEFITS OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP AND ONENESS**

(1 John 1:7; Psalm 133:1-3; John 17:21; Revelation 3:20)

No small obstruction has been caused by strife and contentions to the cause of Christ. A new and instant progress would be recorded if all the followers of the Lord walk in unity and harmony. There *will* be an overflowing *blessedness* in Christendom when we pull down the middle *wall* of partition and all man-made fences. Our unity has the tendency to produce an important influence on the world around us (John 17:21). Until this is done, the body of Christ would be denied her proper influence in the world.

The psalmist exults in jubilant song the blessedness of believers who walk in unity and whose fellowship with God and with one another are unbroken. He said: "**Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beards, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore**" (Psalm 133: 1-3).

**Question 6: Mention the benefits of fellowship.**

Fellowship is good. It possesses the properties of goodness. It is good for our comfort; it brings constant delight. Good works proceed from the life and conduct of people indwelt by the Lord. They engage in deeds of love and kindness. Goodness, as a fruit of the Spirit, is actively manifest as a proof of their union with Christ.

Fellowship is also pleasant. The pleasantness of it is likened to the holy anointing oil. Ointment in the Old Testament is used to anoint and consecrate people and things. Its application signifies specialty, separation and God's peculiar interest in the thing so anointed. It is described as the "**oil of joy**" in Isaiah chapter 61 verse 3, and it is expressive of joy. The psalmist therefore, as

an illustration of brotherly love, talks of its overflowing blessedness in the Church. It is profitable as well as pleasing; it brings blessing numerous as the drops of dew. It cools the scorching heat of men's passions ,as the dews cool the air and refresh the earth. It moistens the heart.

Here, we see the climax of the excellency of brotherly love. Where there is true Christian fellowship with demonstration of pure love, the Lord will always shower blessing upon His people. The eternal life and power of the Triune God who are perfectly united in fellowship will be enjoyed by His people.

### **DAILY BIBLE READING**

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Luke	15-16	Genesis	20-21
TUE	“	17	“	22-23
WED	“	18	“	24
THUR	“	19	“	25
FRI	“	20	“	26
SAT	“	21	“	27
SUN	“	22	“	28-29

**THE END OF THE STUDIES, BUT BE ADVISED THE WORD OF GOD IS TIMELESS (DOES NOT BECOME OBSOLETE AT ANYTIME). THEREFORE, ENDEAVOR TO KEEP THIS BOOK HANDY.**

# DISTRICT CHURCHES DIRECTORY

1. Bronx: 213 E. 144th Street (718) 292-7883
2. Brooklyn: 140 Saratoga Avenue (718) 919-1166
3. Queens: 188-21 Suffolk Drive, St. Albans, NY 11412 (347) 200-3301
4. New Jersey: 23-39 South 20 Street, Irvington (973) 202-3989
5. Staten Island: 144-146 Morningstar Road, Staten Island, NY 10303 (917) 238-2258
6. Spring Valley: 95 North Main street, Suite 1 (845) 709-6058



**ACKNOWLEDGE**  
your sinfulness  
PS 51:3-5

**REPENT OF YOUR SIN**  
Luke 13:3, Acts 3:19

**CONFESS** them to God  
(not to Priest) 1 John 1:9

**FORSAKE** all known sin  
Is 55:7

**BELIEVE** that GOD is true to his  
promise to forgive and clean  
you Jn: 6:37 1 Jn 1:9

**RECEIVE JESUS** into your heart  
Rev. 3:20 Jn 3:17



## **DEEPER CHRISTIAN LIFE MINISTRY, USA**

[www.dclm.org](http://www.dclm.org)

### **DEEPER LIFE BIBLE CHURCH WEEKLY FELLOWSHIP ACTIVITIES**

#### **SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE**

New Jersey	9:00 AM
Bronx/Brooklyn/Queens/Staten Island	9:00 AM
Rockland County	10:30 AM

#### **MONDAY BIBLE STUDY**

Rockland County	7:00 PM
-----------------	---------

#### **TUESDAY BIBLE STUDY**

Bronx/Queens/New Jersey/Co-op City and Staten Island	7:00 PM
---	---------

#### **WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY**

Brooklyn	7:00 PM
----------	---------

#### **THURSDAY (REVIVAL SERVICE) FAITH CLINIC**

Rockland County	7:00 PM
-----------------	---------

#### **FRIDAY (REVIVAL SERVICE) FAITH CLINIC**

All the Church Locations except Rockland County	7:00 PM
---	---------

#### **ALL NIGHT PRAYER VIGILS**

Bronx – First Friday of Every Month	7:00 PM
Brooklyn – Last Friday of Every Month	11:00 PM
Queens – First Friday & Third Friday of Every Month	11:00 PM
New Jersey – Third Friday of Every Month	11:00 PM

**Pastor W.F. Kumuyi – General Superintendent**  
**Your Spiritual Welfare is our Concern**