

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

VOLUME 45

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



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BEGINNING OF OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

573 Lesson

JOSHUA'S CONQUEST OF ENEMY NATIONS

MEMORY VERSE: "He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet" (Psalm 47:3).

TEXT: Joshua 11:1-23

In the previous chapter of the book of Joshua, we learnt how Joshua conquered the coalition forces of the kingdoms in southern Canaan. Prior to this, the children of Israel had conquered the well-fortified city of Jericho, as well as Ai, a feat which frightened the kingdom of Gibeon and moved them to make peace with Israel, albeit wily. The decision to make peace with Israel infuriated Adonizedek, king of Jerusalem, who led four other kings of the southern region to attack Gibeon. But in defense of Gibeon, Israel defeated the five allied kings such that, in a single military campaign, Joshua conquered the most notable cities of southern Canaan.

Now, having secured the central highlands and the southern portion of Canaan, Joshua had the northern cities to contend with. This confrontation is the major focus of our text, and it portrays how God fights for His own people, giving them a resounding victory even in the face of great odds. In these accounts, we also learn how God makes all things work together for good to those that love Him (Romans 8:28). The enemies were associated together so they could be destroyed together by God.

Question 1: Mention the advantage the army of Israel had over their enemies that gathered together against them and how this applies to present-day believers.

THE ALLIANCE OF CANAANITE KINGS AGAINST ISRAEL (Joshua 11:1-5; 9:1,2; Psalm 118:10-12; Isaiah 54:15; Joel 3:9-14; Revelation 16:14; 19:19-21; 1 Corinthians 10:13)

After Joshua had led Israel to defeat the coalition of kings from the south, Jabin the king of Hazor gathered several kings from the north, east and west of the Jordan plain to confront the children of Israel. At different times in the past, the children of Israel had experienced attacks from coalition forces of nations.

Historical records indicate that as at the time the Israelites invaded the land of Canaan, the city of Hazor was by far the most imposing city in all of Palestine and its land mass was enormous, about forty times that of Jericho. It also had a large population and was strategically located. So it was natural that the king of Hazor would be the leader of the coalition forces. He allied with at least nine other prominent kings to launch an attack against Israel (Joshua 11:1-5,10; 12:19-24).

Ordinarily, the coalition of these kings would pose a great threat to Israel's advance and eventual conquest of Canaan. As a matter of fact, this northern coalition army was the most formidable opposition to Israel at the conquest stage because they had horses and chariots, whereas the army of Israel consisted of foot soldiers. The sheer size of their army and array of their armament could strike terror in the hearts of the ill-equipped Israelites. But despite all these, Israel defeated them. This teaches us that if God is on our side our victory is never threatened by the enormity of our challenges or enemies.

Question 2: What should be the attitude of believers whenever their adversaries gather against them?

Believers should not fear or be surprised when enemies gather against them. God has said **“Behold they shall gather together, but not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake”** (Isaiah 54:15). The nations that gathered against Israel

were actually independent city states that were hostile to one another, but because they saw in Israel a common enemy, they temporarily put aside their hostility and formed an evil alliance against God's people. Such is the way of Satan in his attempt to attack believers, but God always defeats him because **“there is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the Lord”** (Proverbs 21:30). Those who stand in opposition against God are always destroyed in the end except they repent.

It is worthy of note here that the Hivites under Hermon in the land of Mizpeh decided to join the evil alliance against Israel (Joshua 11:3). But the Gibeonites were Hivites too, and they decided to align with Israel though the strategy they used left much to be desired (Joshua 9:7-15; 11:19). Because of their respective decisions, the Gibeonites were spared, whereas the Hivites under Hermon were destroyed along with their unbelieving allies. This underscores the fact that it is our decision that determines our destiny. Here, it was not just a matter of whether one is a Hivite or not; what determined their contrasting fate was the decision to either pitch against God or stand with Him. Therefore, those who are in the habit of gathering to plot against God's anointed ministers, or against any child of God for that matter, should take warning and repent quickly lest they come under divine judgment.

Question 3: What can believers learn from the way God graduated the battles Israel had to fight in the Promised Land?

It is important to note that this battle against the northern coalition in Canaan was the last major military campaign that Joshua led before sharing the land for Israel. As we consider this battle and others before it, we observe that God graduated the battles which Israel had to fight in the Promised Land. First, it was against Jericho, and after that Ai. Those were individual cities and Israel took them one at a time. But as the Israelites grew in confidence, God allowed a coalition of nations to confront them. In the southern campaign, they were faced with a coalition of five kings, but in the northern campaign they faced an army more formidable, more in

number and better equipped with horses and chariots. The point here is that God graduates our trials and challenges according to our strength. He will never allow us to be tempted beyond that which we are able to bear (1 Corinthians 10:13).

ASSURANCE AND VICTORY OVER ENEMY FORCES (Joshua 11:6-15; 1:3-8; Deuteronomy 20:1; 3:22; Isaiah 43:1,2)

As the enemy nations joined forces against Israel, God needed to encourage Joshua who in turn would be able to encourage his men. The enemy army was very large **“and they went out, they and all their hosts with them, much people, even as the sand that is upon the sea shore in multitude, with horses and chariots very many”** (Joshua 11:4). In their earlier battles they had not confronted horsemen or riders of chariots, but now as they approached the last lap of their military operations before occupying Canaan they were to contend with them. Therefore, God had to reassure Joshua not to fear the enemy or their weapons. God gave Joshua an assurance of victory. **“And the Lord said unto Joshua, Be not afraid because of them: for tomorrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel: thou shalt hough their horses, and burn their chariots with fire”** (Joshua 11:6).

There are times in our lives, as believers, when we need fresh encouragement and reassurance from God. At such times, we need Him to lift up our hands and strengthen our hearts, especially when we face challenges that are really tasking. It is good to know that the Lord will never leave us alone at such times but His Spirit and His servants are always at hand to offer us the needed encouragement.

However, it must be noted that God’s message of encouragement to Joshua was actually a re-affirmation of what God had earlier said to Moses and the entire nation even before they entered Canaan (Deuteronomy 20:1). We observe that there was no discrepancy in the new message God gave to encourage Joshua and that

which He had spoken through Moses. The lesson is that God never contradicts Himself; rather, He works according to His written word.

Any revelation, vision, dream or teaching that contradicts the written word of God in any respect must be rejected. In these days when every wind of doctrine is blowing more violently than ever before, believers should hold the word of God in high esteem and believe its promises, obey its commands, and follow its examples, rather than hanker after sub-biblical prophecies and vain jangling which lead to error. This warning is especially necessary because many believers are developing itching ears and several charlatans are on the rampage, claiming to be messengers sent by God.

Question 4: (a) From the encouragement God gave Joshua, point out the qualities of a true message from God. (b) What can believers learn from this reassurance?

God told Joshua not to be afraid of the host that gathered against him because the Lord would deliver them slain before Israel. Though Israel would have to engage the enemies in a physical battle, God promised to defeat them. In this, we are reminded again of the principle of divine-human partnership in accomplishing divine purposes. Israel was required to cooperate with God in confronting the Canaanites just as believers are required to partner with Him in the evangelization of the world. Believers are to preach the gospel in an attempt to win the lost to Christ, but the Lord promised, **“lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world, Amen”** (Matthew 28:20b).

Question 5: Mention four characteristics displayed by Joshua which every child of God should manifest as they engage in spiritual warfare.

In God’s promise to Joshua, we also notice an indication of the divine timing for the battle: **“for tomorrow about this time will I deliver them up slain before Israel”**. So, as soon as God spoke to him, Joshua quickly planned his strategy and mobilized his army. He

employed the strategy of pre-emptive strike (surprise attack), rather than allow the enemy determine the terrain for the battle and be in a position to use their forces and chariots. He took this initiative so that they were driven to the mountains where their horses and chariots were useless.

The steps taken by Joshua reflects his sensitivity to divine timing, wisdom, faith and obedience that should characterize true children of God as they engage in life's battles. The king of Hazor and his confederate army were caught unawares by Joshua's sudden attack and they were defeated. The children of Israel "**houghed their horses and burnt their chariots with fire.**" Houghing the horses means he made the horses lame by cutting the muscles or ligaments around the hoof so that they would no longer be useful for warfare. By this action, God would have Israel show their disdain for carnal weapons of war and rather put their trust in Him (Deuteronomy 17:16; 2 Samuel 8:4; Isaiah 31:1). This was intended to prevent Israel from putting their confidence in horses or chariots in time of battle, an action that would amount to self-confidence, pride and a rejection of divine help. God would have his people retain their testimony that, "**Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God. They are brought down and fallen: but we are risen, and stand upright**" (Psalm 20:7,8).

It is significant to note that in all these things, Joshua was careful to pay attention to the details of God's instructions through Moses. "**He left nothing undone of all that the LORD commanded Moses**" (Joshua 11:15b). This action of Joshua is a challenge to present day believers, and also reminds us that when we obey God's instructions victory and blessings will be the ultimate outcome.

ACCOUNTS OF ISRAEL'S CONQUEST IN CANAAN
(Joshua 11:16-23; 13:1-6; Colossians 3:5-9; Hebrews 12:14-17)

Our text ends with a brief account or summary of the conquests made by Joshua in the Promised Land. **“So Joshua took all that land, the hills, and all the south country, and all the land of Goshen, and the valley, and the plain, and the mountain of Israel, and the valley of the same; Even from the mount Halak, that goeth up to Seir, even unto Baalgad in the valley of Lebanon under mount Hermon: and all their kings he took, and smote them, and slew them”** (Joshua 11:16,17). He led Israel to gain control of the entire territory, even though they did not capture every individual city (Joshua 13:1-6).

However, these unconquered city states became a thorn in their flesh in succeeding generations. For instance, the Philistines which inhabited Gaza, Gath and Ashdod became Israel’s worst enemy until the time of David when they were subdued. Others, which did not so much constitute a threat, became constant snares into idolatry and syncretism which eventually stirred up God’s anger against Israel.

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| <p>Question 6: Point out the consequences of Israel’s failure to conquer all the city states in Canaan, and the application to believers today.</p> |
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Unconquered flesh, or the “self-life” left untamed, is a potential danger to the entire spiritual life of a believer. If a believer is not entirely sanctified or crucified to the flesh and the world, if he/she allows a pet area of the old life to be spared and not totally crushed by the cross of Christ, then that seemingly little thing may eventually become a source of defilement to one’s whole Christian life. A ‘little’ talkativeness, boasting, love of ease/pleasure, quick temper, prayerlessness, idleness, and the like can ruin a believer’s spiritual life.

We also notice that the conquest of Canaan under Joshua did not happen in one single battle, but it took a long time to achieve. If we use the age of Caleb as a yardstick for our estimate, the battles for the occupation of Canaan must have lasted about six or seven years. Caleb was forty years old when the wilderness wanderings began. Then at the end of the wilderness

journeys which took Israel about thirty-eight years Caleb would be around seventy-eight. That was when the battle to occupy Canaan began, and by the time it ended and the land was ready for sharing Caleb was eighty-five years old (Joshua 14:6-10).

The fact that it took a long time for Israel to conquer the land of Canaan teaches us to be patient with God as we expect Him to fulfill His promises in our lives. Many times, people want a sudden change in their circumstances. So then, believers should not regard divine delays as something designed for their hurt, or to deny them a much desired blessing, rather they should understand that God is working all things for their good. Our battles will eventually come to an end and the purposes of God will be fulfilled in our lives. But we must learn to be patient and wait for God.

DAILY BIBLE READING

| MORNING | | | EVENING | |
|----------------|--------|-----|----------------|-------|
| MON | Luke | 2 | Genesis | 30 |
| TUE | “ | 24 | “ | 31 |
| WED | John 1 | 1 | “ | 32 |
| THUR | “ | 2-3 | “ | 33 |
| FRI | “ | 4 | “ | 34-35 |
| SAT | “ | 5 | “ | 36 |
| SUN | “ | 6 | “ | 37 |

574 Lesson

ROSTER OF CONQUERED KINGS

TEXT: Joshua 12:1-24

MEMORY VERSE: “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Israel's conquest of enemy nations on the northern territory of Canaan was the theme of the preceding chapter. In that account, we learn that victory is always sure over formidable enemies where there is interplay of divine intervention and use of appropriate human strategy. After crossing Jordan, the strategy of Joshua was to take Jericho, a gateway city, which gave access to the central cities of Bethel, Gibeon and Upper Beth Horon. Having secured these hill countries, he took control of the fords of Jordan and the major roads connecting the north and south. From there, he launched against the southern cities around Lachish and consolidated his hold on the central and southern Canaan. Finally, he attacked the northern coalition led by Hazor, thereby conquering the land as God had promised. Though God intervened to give Israel a resounding victory over their enemies, Joshua had to employ brilliant military strategies to win his battles. As men trust in God to intervene in their lives, they must not fail to take appropriate steps that will make their expectation become a reality.

Question 1: From Israel's conquest of Canaan, point out the relationship between God's intervention and the use of human strategies in achieving set goals.

In our text, the Holy Spirit inspired the writer to record a list of the kings and kingdoms conquered by the Israelites. It was a kind of summary, signifying the conclusion of the first phase of Israel's occupation of Canaan. God's mandate for Joshua consisted of two phases, namely: to conquer the land and divide it for the children of

Israel to possess according to their tribes (Joshua 1:2-6). Having completed the first phase - conquest of the land - it was necessary to take an inventory of the kings and kingdoms that were conquered.

PURPOSE OF THE ROSTER OF CONQUERED KINGS

(Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:16,17; 1 Corinthians 10:11; Lamentations 3:21-23; Psalm 44:2; 77:11-12; Deuteronomy 7:9)

The list of unfamiliar names and territories in our text may appear dry to a casual reader of the Bible. But the inclusion of the roster of conquered kings in the Scripture was meant to teach believers significant lessons that will culminate into a successful pilgrimage to the Promised Land, heaven. **“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope”** (Romans 15:4). Though Joshua and Israel had physical kings and kingdoms to contend with, believers are engaged in a spiritual warfare against unseen rulers of darkness. But just as God gave Israel a resounding victory over their foes, He will equally give us victory in all our battles.

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| <p>Question 2: What is the purpose of writing a list of the conquered kings?</p> |
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This roster of conquered kings and the detailed description of their territories serve the following purposes: First, it shows the faithfulness of God and reliability of His promises to His people (Exodus 23:27-31).

Second, the roster is to reassure us that scriptural accounts are not mere fairy tales or human ideas, but they are real and true. The geographical location where the events happened, and the specific personalities involved can be identified. And this is in perfect harmony with the evidence adduced by Apostle Peter in support of the inspiration and reliability of the scriptures (2 Peter 1:16).

Third, it reminded the Israelites of God's intervention in their conquest of Canaan as well as taught upcoming generations the necessity of remembering the past manifestations of God's grace in their lives. Looking at the list of conquered kings, one could see the names of many powerful kings and fortified kingdoms which Israel could not have conquered by their own military prowess alone. For example, Sihon the king of the Amorites, Og the king of Bashan, and the city of Jericho were quite formidable. But Israel conquered them through God's help. This list, then, would always remind Israel that they owed their victories to God and His mercy towards them (Psalm 44:2).

Fourth, it was written to strengthen the faith of God's people, knowing that if God helped them to conquer these mighty kings, then He would certainly help them to conquer the remaining kings and defeat all future oppositions. **Fifth**, the roster would serve as a data for strategic planning in the final conquest and sharing of Canaan among the tribes of Israel. By taking stock of the conquered kings, it was easy to identify those that were not yet conquered, and territories that needed more concerted effort to possess.

Sixth, the roster is to instruct New Testament believers how God would also help them conquer spiritual kings and kingdoms in order to possess their heavenly inheritance. Believers can conquer principalities, powers of darkness and all wicked spirits in heavenly places.

Question 3: Why is it necessary for believers to count their blessings or keep an inventory of God's interventions in their lives?

As believers, we need to keep a roster of God's mighty victories in our lives so that we can call them to mind in times of future battles. Such an inventory of past victories will aid us in counting our blessings and also remind us of the many dangers, toils and snares through which divine grace has brought us. This is what David did as he prepared to confront Goliath of Gath. He remembered the victories God gave him over

the lion and the bear. Thus emboldened, he declared: **“Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear; he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine”** (1 Samuel 17:36,37a).

PERTINENT LESSONS FROM THE ROSTER OF CONQUERED KINGS (Deuteronomy 9:4; Numbers 14:45; Joshua 12:14; Isaiah 59:1,2; 2 Chronicles 7:14)

There are great lessons from these kings and kingdoms that were conquered by the Israelites. First, we learn that it was on account of their sinfulness and great wickedness that God dispossessed them of their land and power to defend it. **“Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the LORD thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the LORD hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD doth drive them out from before thee”** (Deuteronomy 9:4). Sin can rob and dispossess a person of his/her God-given inheritance.

Question 4: What lessons can believers learn from the conquest of the kings of Canaan?

It is very important we take note of some of the conquered kings and their territories so we can learn from them. One such significant territory in our text is Hormah (Joshua 12:14). These Canaanites had earlier defeated Israel because of their unbelief and rebellion against God (Numbers 14:45). But a new generation of Israel who were obedient to God conquered the king and people of Hormah. This underscores the fact that sin is a limiting factor and the cause of defeat in life and ministry (Isaiah 59:1,2). Besides, failure need not be final for a believer who is ready to repent and obey God’s will and word. The restored believer who abides in the will of God will possess his possession.

Another significant city in this roster is Kedesh (Joshua 12:22). This city became a city of refuge in Israel (Joshua 19:37; 20:7). For the Canaanites, Kedesh was a place of great transgression and sacrilege, but God took it from them, cleansed it and turned it into a place of refuge for asylum seekers who wished to escape from the avenger of blood. God, by His mighty power, is able to transform that which is ignoble and defiled to become an instrument of honor and blessing. Similarly, when sinners repent and yield themselves to God, they are transformed from being children of wrath to children of God.

Question 5: What is the significance of the mention of conquests under the leadership of Moses in this roster of conquered kings?

Reference to conquests of kings under the leadership of Moses and Joshua, his successor remind us that God's work is continuous and cumulative. The activities of God's servants are also complementary. So, as we count our blessings or take inventory of our accomplishments, we should acknowledge those who contributed to our success story and not give the impression that there was no input from other people. In the case of Moses and Joshua, the conquest of Sihon and Og on eastern Jordan opened the way for the conquest of other Canaanite kings on western Jordan; and as such one could not do without the other.

However, one mistake a casual reader of this list may make is to attempt a carnal comparison of the number of kings conquered under the leadership of Moses and Joshua. Two kings were conquered under the leadership of Moses while thirty-one kings were conquered under the leadership of Joshua, but that fact alone did not mean Joshua was greater or more successful than Moses. Man, by nature, is prone to engaging in carnal comparison with others and thereby reaching unwise conclusions. This is what happened after David conquered Goliath and the women began to sing: **"Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousand"** (1 Samuel 18:7b). It aroused a bitter

jealousy in Saul and he began to persecute David. Thus, believers should avoid all forms of carnal comparison of ourselves with others because it is unwise (2 Corinthians 10:12).

However, it should be noted that beyond the personalities of Moses and Joshua as leaders of the conquests, there is a deeper significance and instruction. Moses represented the dispensation of the law, whereas Joshua was a type of Christ, who represented the dispensation of grace. Under grace, much conquest should be expected than under the law, though both dispensations are not mutually exclusive.

PARTAKING IN THE REIGN OF CHRIST, THE CONQUEROR-KING (Colossians 2:15; 1 Corinthians 15:57; 2 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 4:8; 1 John 3:3)

The victory of Israel over the kings of Canaan is a picture of believers' conquest in Christ over the kingdom of Satan. Like human kings, principalities, powers and wicked spirits are also ruling over men contrary to the will of God. By virtue of His death and resurrection, Jesus Christ conquered Satan and his entire kingdom; **“and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it”** (Colossians 2:15). Having conquered them, He has also empowered believers to partake of His victory. In Christ, true believers have victory over Satan, sin, self, demons, and the world.

Writing about the victory of believers in Christ, Apostle Paul said, **“But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”** (1 Corinthians 15:57; 2 Corinthians 2:14).

Question 6: Point out the implication of Christ's victory over Satan for believers.

The implication of the victory of Christ for believers is that they are now more than conquerors and the prince of this world has no more dominion over them. Just as the children of Israel dispossessed the Canaanite

kings and spoiled them, those who are in Christ have also spoiled Satan and his kingdom. As a matter of fact, the long awaited expectation of the saints shall soon be realized **“and the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever”** (Revelation 11:15). Then, the saints of God will inherit the kingdom with Christ **“for he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet”** (1 Corinthians 15:25). To partake in that glorious kingdom of Christ, sinners must repent, forsake their sins and put their faith in Christ for salvation and believers must continue to live a life of faith and holiness till the end.

DAILY BIBLE READING

| MORNING | | | EVENING | |
|----------------|------|-------|----------------|-------|
| MON | John | 7 | Genesis | 38 |
| TUE | “ | 8 | “ | 39-40 |
| WED | “ | 9 | “ | 41 |
| THUR | “ | 10 | “ | 42 |
| FRI | “ | 11 | “ | 43 |
| SAT | “ | 12 | “ | 44-45 |
| SUN | “ | 13-14 | “ | 46 |

575 Lesson

THE UNFINISHED TASK

MEMORY VERSE: “Now Joshua was old and stricken in years; and the LORD said unto him, Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed” (Joshua 13:1).

TEXT: Joshua 13:1-6

The text opens with the record of advancement in the age of Joshua. At this period, Joshua was about 100 years old, having remained alive for about 30 years after entering Canaan. He was one of the twelve spies selected by Moses as was instructed by the Lord to spy the land of Canaan before the children of Israel went in to possess it (Numbers 13:1,2,4,8). It is noteworthy that while others wandered and perished in the wilderness for their unbelief, the Lord preserved Caleb and Joshua as He had promised (Numbers 26:65). They were preserved despite the dangers of warfare and other hazards on their way.

Question 1: What essential qualities did Joshua possess that sustained him till old age?

GOD’S UNCHANGING POWER AND PURPOSE FOR HIS PEOPLE (Joshua 13:1; Genesis 15:7,13,14,18-21; 17:1,8; Psalm 105:8-12; Genesis 28:4; Exodus 6:8; Deuteronomy 4:37,38; Isaiah 55:10-12)

The Lord had earlier promised Abraham that the land of Canaan was to be his descendants’. Several generations had passed now, but God’s promises were unchanging. This shows that length of time, multiplication of intervening and interrupting events do not alter God’s plans and promises for His people (Malachi 3:6). Furthermore, change of leadership occasioned by the death of Moses did not force a change in the original agenda of God for His chosen people. What a challenge

to some churches today who, on the passing away of the founder or first leader of the ministry, throw overboard the original vision God had given the church!

Joshua was to continue what God had started with him before crossing river Jordan. Earlier, he had led Israel in offensives against and conquests of all the kings of the land west of Jordan for a spate of five years. The conquered land had been allotted to two and half tribes of Israel. Here, God now gave further instructions to Joshua that the remaining nine and half tribes must be allotted their own portions of land.

Age is no barrier to God's plan. He used young Jeremiah as a prophet (Jeremiah 1:6,7); Joash became a king when he was seven years old (2 Kings 11:21); Moses led Israel till the age of 120 years; Enoch 'walked' with God till he was 365 years old when God took him away (Genesis 5:22-24). It was therefore no surprise that God told Joshua that although he was "**old and stricken in years**", his ministry had not expired. There were still much to be accomplished for the Lord and His people; hence, he could not retire. Indeed, from this chapter, he was to continue the second phase of his ministry/ assignment till chapter 24, the very last chapter of the book of Joshua.

Question 2: Mention some people who were greatly used by God in spite of their ages.

Believers are not allowed to retire from God's service; neither should they excuse themselves from God's work on grounds of age. Faithfulness to the Lord in whatever sphere of His work is highly profitable in life. Faithfulness and unflinching faith in God will guarantee the fulfillment of His promises in our lives.

God uses men who are obedient to Him and are yielded vessels in His hands. Such people are never discarded on the basis of personal shortcomings (Exodus 4:10,11), age (Jeremiah 1:7), infirmity (2 Corinthians 12:9), or other non-spiritual qualifications such as low level of education, low financial status, etc. (Acts 4:13; 1 Corinthians 1:26-28).

Joshua was therefore reminded by God that he had been saddled with the responsibility, not only of conquering physically those kings and kingdoms that he had already warred against, but also conquering by faith, the remaining land by dividing it between the nine and half tribes of Israel. This is instructive to contemporary believers. Past successes and victories should not make us rest on our oars. **“There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed”**. In addition, the seemingly insignificance of past victories compared to the vastness of future challenges should not cow or intimidate believers who are in the perfect will of God. We must always remember that through faith, we will get the desired victory.

GOD’S PLANS AND PRECEPTS FOR POSSESSING THE LAND (Joshua 13:2-5; Jeremiah 1:17-19; Joshua 1:3-6)

The Lord specified the territories that Joshua was to map out and divide among the remaining tribes of Israel. This land included Sihor, the border of Egypt to Ekron – all the borders of the Philistines including the northern part; Geshur, which lay on the south of Canaan; Avites, who were parts of the giants who were dispossessed by Caphtorims (Deuteronomy 2:23); all the land of the Canaanites from the south towards the north to Mearah near Sidon of Phoenicia and east of Aphek in Syria; all the land of the Giblites, that is, the inhabitants of Gebal, north of Palestine; all east of Lebanon from Baal-gad under mount Hermon and to Harmath; all inhabitants of the hill country in north Palestine from Lebanon to Misrephoth-maine and all the Sidonians, and inhabitants of Phoenicians in general.

Question 3: Name the tribes of Israel for which Joshua was to divide the land.

The other side of Jordan had been apportioned to two and a half tribes of Israel: Reuben, Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh. The remaining nine and half tribes namely, the remaining half of the tribe of Manasseh,

Judah, Ephraim, Benjamin, Simeon, Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali and Dan were now to be the beneficiaries of this last exercise of land allotment.

The instructions God gave to Joshua on how to divide the lands yet unconquered among the remaining tribes are instructive to the body of believers. The Church is to encompass the whole land with the gospel (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20). As the land that Joshua was to divide among his people were inhabited by various kinds of people, the gospel is also to be taken to all tribes, tongues, people, territories and climes. Their countenance, culture, belief-system, hardness, and clumsiness should not deter us from this great task. **“This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world...”** (Matthew 24:14).

Question 4: Describe the similarities between Joshua’s assignment and the DAWN program of the Church.

The need to strategically partition (divide) territories for systematic conquest with the gospel cannot be over-emphasized if the mandate of our Lord Jesus Christ for the Church is to be carried out. The program of the church in **Discipling A Whole Nation** (DAWN) is a God-given vision to ensure no land within national territories is left untouched with the gospel. In this wise, territories would be clearly demarcated and leadership at various levels should allot portions to various tribes (nations, states, regions and group of districts) to reach with the gospel.

Taking the territories allotted to each tribe in Israel demanded launching offensives against the original inhabitants, dispossessing them and finally occupying the territory. It was therefore not a simple matter of walking in and taking possession. It demanded strategizing, systematic planning and obedience to and dependence on God. The Church does not need anything less to carry out Christ’s mandate.

GOD’S PROMISED PATNERSHIP AND VICTORY FOR HIS PEOPLE (Joshua 13:6; 1:3,4; Exodus 3:12; Jeremiah 1:10-12; Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18)

“All the inhabitants of the hill country... them will I drive out from before the children of Israel...”. What a cheering assurance! The seemingly arduous task had been made surmountable by the assurance of the conquering power and presence of the Lord. The certainty and finality of God’s assuring promises are sufficient for believers to forge ahead and do His will in spite of challenges. No excuse is therefore tenable enough to make us shirk our God-given responsibilities or abandon our duty posts.

The solemn charge to preach the gospel goes with a strong promise: **“And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”**. Thus, no demon, serpent or poison shall be able to do us any harm. No word of God is void of power and no promise is vain. If believers will arm themselves today with the gospel of truth, propelled by the command of the Lord and fortified with the promises of God, the mandate of covering all land and clime will be carried out in no time.

Question 5: (a): What was the condition to be fulfilled by Joshua for God to drive out the original occupants of the land? (b) How does this apply to contemporary believers in terms of enjoying God’s blessings?

The place of obedience in doing the will of God cannot be over-emphasized. It was important that Joshua first obeyed God’s command for the Israelites to possess their possessions and for God to fulfill His promise of driving out the inhabitants of the land. **“...Only divide thou it by lot unto the Israelites for an inheritance, as I have commanded thee.”** This is a contrast to what obtains in our society today. Many people always want God to fulfill His promises in their lives first before they obey Him. What a miscalculation! In God’s economy, the obedient is the blessed (Isaiah 1:19; Deuteronomy 28:1). No matter the enormity of the task before us, God’s promises are dependable, potent and unfailing if only we obey.

DAILY BIBLE READING

| MORNING | | | EVENING | |
|----------------|------|-------|----------------|-------|
| MON | John | 15-16 | Genesis | 47 |
| TUE | “ | 17-18 | “ | 48-49 |
| WED | “ | 19 | “ | 50 |
| THUR | “ | 20-21 | Exodus | 1-2 |
| FRI | Acts | 1-2 | “ | 3-4 |
| SAT | “ | 3 | “ | 5-6 |
| SUN | “ | 4 | “ | 7-8 |

576 Lesson

DIVISION OF THE PROMISED LAND FOR INHERITANCE

MEMORY VERSE: “And Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD: and there Joshua divided the land unto the children of Israel according to their divisions” (Joshua 18:10).

TEXT: Joshua 13:7-33, 15: 13-17; 16:10; 17:1-18

In the previous chapter, a list of the kings defeated by Moses and Joshua had been made, reminding us of the great exploits that the Almighty God wrought through these men. Yet, God was concerned with the expanse of land and kingdoms still to be possessed by the children of Israel. Therefore, He made a dispassionate evaluation and concluded that, while Joshua was already becoming old and well “**stricken in years ...there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed**” (Joshua 13:1).

The Lord would not take anything less than His absolute will; He would not compromise His inheritance with the enemy. His perfect desire is that His children possess all that He has promised them. In like manner, believers are not to be satisfied with anything less than the perfect will of God for their lives. Pharaoh wanted some of the people to stay back in Egypt, but Moses insisted that “**an hoof**” of their animals would not be left behind (Exodus 10:8-26).

Besides, God never encourages us to bask in past glories and victories or rest on our oars. Rather, He expects us to rise to our present challenges, using our past victories as stepping-stones of faith to greater achievements. While the efforts of God’s servants who have served Him faithfully in the past as well as contemporary times are in His records, the church cannot survive merely on the victories and testimonies of previous leaders who served their own generations faithfully. Divine expectation demands current and present consecration by the men and women of the hour to stand by God’s holy standards

as well as unwavering commitment to the continuous fulfillment of the Great Commission till the Lord comes. It is His will that the gospel be preached in *all* the world for a witness to *all* nations; anything less than this is not His perfect will.

Question 1: What should be the believer's attitude to past personal or denominational spiritual accomplishments?

THE COMMAND TO DIVIDE THE LAND (Joshua 13:7-14; Numbers 33:54; 34:29; Joshua 1:6; Ezekiel 48:29)

“Now therefore divide this land for an inheritance unto the nine tribes, and the half tribe of Manasseh” (Joshua 13:7).

God's solution to the advancing years of Joshua and the large expanse of land remaining to be conquered was for the land to be divided among the various tribes so that each tribe could take direct responsibility for conquering its own allotted portion.

Earlier the Lord had told Moses that the land of Canaan would be divided among the twelve tribes of Israel for their inheritance. Though many years had passed with the attendant challenges, God never flagged in His commitment to give the land to His people as promised to their patriarchs (Genesis 13:15; 17:8; 28:13). He subdued Pharaoh, divided the Red Sea and Jordan River, and conquered kings in order that His promise of a land flowing with milk and honey might be fulfilled.

The order to divide the land included portions already conquered as well as the parts yet to be. Perhaps Joshua would have waited till they conquered the whole land before dividing it, but the Lord knew better. He knew that if the children of Israel would cooperate with Him, they should sometime be in full control of their possessions. Here we have insight into the workings and will of the Almighty – He it is that counts the things that be not as though they were. He wants His children to have His kind of faith too (Mark 11:22). Believers are to walk by faith knowing full well that all that God has

promised them will surely be theirs.

Question 2: What principles lie behind the command to divide the unconquered parts of the Promised Land among the tribes of Israel?

In the first place, it lay within divine wisdom and sovereignty to decide how His work must be done at a particular time. He determines the timing of events according to His foreknowledge. Those leading the church of God must be sensitive to His leading rather than falling back on human experience or models. Secondly, it was an act of faith to divide unconquered land for inheritance. It was a direct challenge to the faith of each tribe to prove God's presence with them by facing the adversaries who were still in possession of the land and were neither ready nor willing to relinquish it. Certainly, God never enjoys seeing His children running away from obstacles when they could, instead, lean on Him and achieve victories very much beyond their natural abilities. Thirdly, the Almighty wants all His children to be strong and to turn back the enemy at the gate.

Each tribe of Israel was to face the challenges of possessing its own portion. This is a great lesson to believers today to cooperate and stand with God through prayers in order to obtain their needed victory. As a servant of God once put it: 'on his knees, the believer is invincible.'

Question 3: How can members of the church today discover and actualize their spiritual potentials?

Following this example, leaders should encourage all believers to discover their God-given talents and gifts, develop and use them for God's glory. Leaders would be remembered by the people they urged to actualize their potentials. This principle was well demonstrated by Caleb, one of the notable fathers in the tribe of Judah. He maintained his characteristic diligence of faith which he demonstrated in his younger days under the leadership of Joshua. Having gone ahead to conquer

and possess the city of Arba by driving out the giants, he challenged his followers to follow his daring example with a juicy reward of marriage to his daughter for anyone courageous enough to take the city of Debir. **“And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjathsepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife. And Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife”** (Joshua 15:16,17).

Question 4: What lesson can leaders learn from Caleb’s challenge to the younger generation?

Many church members are not conscious of their God-given abilities until their minds are stirred up to it. It took the Apostle Paul telling Timothy to stir up the gift that was in him (1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6). Leaders should assist up-coming ministers to be their best for the Lord. Also, believers should make themselves available for God’s work as many gifts would remain hidden in idleness but only manifest or be stretched to their fullest when put to use.

Exploits in the kingdom of God is not gender-sensitive: men and women can be used of God to achieve His purpose. Achsah, the daughter of Caleb got a south land other blessings for her family (Joshua 15:18,19). The daughters of Zelophehad, of the tribe of Manasseh boldly came to Joshua and the elders and requested for the inheritance of their father, who had no sons (Joshua 17:3-6). Their faith, courteous approach and respect for leadership remained an example in peaceful dialogue and courtesy in dealing with leaders on important issues.

THE CHALLENGE BEFORE THE TRIBES (Joshua 15:13-17, 63; 16:10; 17:12-18; Numbers 33:52-53; Exodus 34:13; Deuteronomy 7:5; 12:3; Colossians 3:1-10; Hebrews 12:1; Ephesians 5:1-10)

It is true that the promise of a land for inheritance had been given by no less being than the Almighty who has power to bring about His will. (He is the One who cannot

be restrained when He is purposed to do His bidding). But the children of Israel had to contend with daunting challenges before they could possess their inheritance. While the promise to drive out the Canaanites remained intact, there was still the need for them to fulfill their side of the divine/human partnership in the conquest of Canaan. The giants in the land whose sight alone would intimidate the bravest soldier and sworn adversaries who would never surrender their land unless subdued under God's mighty arm were there to fight.

Besides, their victories were limited by their inability to obey fully the commandments of the Lord. He had told them not to spare the people or their idols. **“Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places: And ye shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land, and dwell therein: for I have given you the land to possess it”** (Numbers 33:52-53; Exodus 34:13; Deuteronomy 7:5; 12:3). For example, the tribes of Judah, Ephraim and Manasseh did not fully possess the land allotted to them as they spared some of the Canaanite tribes their under the guise of making them tribute paying servants (Joshua 15:63; 16:10; 17:12,13). This was not the perfect plan of God for them, and it became a problem for all tribes who adopted this model, because, as God had warned them, those tribes that were spared would become snares and sources of temptations to them later. Believers in the New Testament have been warned not to spare their old fallen nature after they are saved, but to ensure that they put off all the habits of the old life and the deceitful lusts (Colossians 3:1-10; Hebrews 12:1; Ephesians 5:1-10).

Another challenge was that the children of Joseph felt that their portion was too small for them considering their great number. The solution, according to Joshua would involve two tasks: they were to get up to the wood country, clear the forest and enlarge their habitation. Secondly, realizing this dream would involve confronting

the giants with superior weapons like iron chariots. Joshua, in answering them pointed out that though the hilly regions were occupied by giants and the valleys by tribes with formidable defenses, the solution lay in putting their number advantage to use against the enemies (Joshua 17:14-18).

We learn here, as believers that there are forces to contend with if we desire the higher spiritual life. If our desire is to live the deeper and greater life of righteousness, holiness and purity, we have to fight the good fight of faith. Moreover, we have to continually subdue and put our flesh into subjection so that we might attain **“unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”** (Ephesians 4:13).

Question 5: How can we surmount challenges and obstacles in life and ministry?

Joshua’s challenge to the tribes of Joseph remains an all-time model for godly leaders. In every situation, leaders must declare the whole counsel of God and must not be influenced by what the people see as insurmountable challenges. As the angel of the Lord pointed out the hidden talents in Gideon to him even when he was fearful of the Midianites (Judges 6:11-14), leaders should challenge their members to use their latent abilities in God’s service. Members should also not bury their talents as they would give account on the last day. In the battles of life, victory and the solution often lie in acting prayerfully with faith in God and not in beating a hasty retreat in the face of challenges.

COMPLETING THE DIVISION OF THE LAND (Joshua 14:2; 15:1; 16:1; 17:2; 18:10; Numbers 26:52-56; 33:54; Proverbs 18:18)

Joshua obeyed the commandment of the Lord to divide the land among the remaining nine and a half tribes. Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh had received theirs on the east of the Jordan River by the hand of Moses. Joshua ensured he completed this task as he was commanded. **“And Joshua cast lots for them in**

Shiloh before the LORD: and there Joshua divided the land unto the children of Israel according to their divisions” (Joshua 18:10). It should be noted that he did not deviate from divine directive on the mode of division. He was not allowed to carry out this delicate task as it pleased him, though he was a wise and intelligent leader. He did it entirely by lot, which deferred the matter wholly to God and His sovereign will.

Casting lots was an ancient practice of seeking divine opinion or position on a matter. When a case could not be settled by mutual compromise among parties, for example, a lot was cast and the parties submitted to the outcome, bringing an end to all strife.

Question 6: What can we deduce from the Lord’s command to Joshua to divide the land by lot?

In dividing the land by lot, a number of issues come to mind. First, this practice left the determination of every tribe’s portion to God. Hence, it would be wrong for any tribe to pick quarrels with Joshua because, though he supervised and presided over the process, **“the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD”** (Proverbs 16:33). This helped to remove such accusations as partiality, prejudice or preference. It silenced those who would have accused Joshua of favoring one tribe above the other. Even the tribe of Levi who were not given any inheritance except lands to dwell in and fields for their cattle, they could not complain because the Lord willed it so. Second, it ensured equity and fair-play in the distribution of inheritance. The Lord had earlier said: **“To many thou shalt give the more inheritance, and to few thou shalt give the less inheritance: to every one shall his inheritance be given according to those that were numbered of him”** (Numbers 26:54). Third, it minimized complaints arising from the division, giving Joshua enough room to address the few ones that arose. For example, when the children of Joseph sued for additional lot, it was wisely and amicably handled. Fourth, whatever fell to any tribe

was regarded as the perfect will of God. Surely, **“The lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty”** (Proverbs 18:18). Fifth, God determines the portion of His children in this life and every believer must be content with His endowment and bestowal. We should therefore **“think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith”** (Romans 12:3). This, however, does not take away the desire or aspiration to excel in the service of God and to be the best for Him (1 Timothy 3:1).

Believers should learn to know the mind of God when taking important decisions in life. Where there seems to be no clear directives, they should leave matters in His hands because He knows the end from the beginning.

DAILY BIBLE READING

| MORNING | | | EVENING | |
|----------------|------|-----|----------------|-------|
| MON | Acts | 5-6 | Exodus | 9 |
| TUE | “ | 7 | “ | 10-11 |
| WED | “ | 8 | “ | 12 |
| THUR | “ | 9 | “ | 13 |
| FRI | “ | 10 | “ | 14-15 |
| SAT | “ | 11 | “ | 16 |
| SUN | “ | 12 | “ | 17-18 |

577 Lesson

POSSESSION OF INHERITANCE BY LOT

MEMORY VERSE: “He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved” (Psalm 47:4).

TEXT: Joshua 14:1-15

The previous chapter focused on the division of the land east of the Jordan, but our text begins with the account of how the land west of the Jordan was divided by lot among the nine and half tribes of Israel. This settlement of the children of Israel on this side of the Jordan took place in two phases. Our text records the first phase which was done at Gilgal (Joshua 14:6); the second phase was done later at Shiloh (Joshua 18:1; 19:51). In the first phase, the tribes of Judah and Joseph (Ephraim and half tribe of Manasseh) were given their possessions; but the remaining seven tribes were settled during the second phase. It is significant to note that the whole account of sharing the land began with the portion of Caleb and ended with the portion given to Joshua, the two faithful spies who believed God (Joshua 14:6-15; 19:49-51). Hence, it can be said that the sharing of the land of Canaan signified the faithfulness of God to His faithful people.

This account shows that the Israelites were not left to choose any portion they fancied in a haphazard manner: God determined the portion that was given to each of them. In sharing the land, God used Eleazar the priest, Joshua and the elders representing each of the tribes to oversee the process; and to avoid any appearance of personal bias, favoritism or human manipulations, God directed that the allocation be done by casting lots. That strategy left the choice of inheritance for each tribe solely in the hands of God.

Question 1: Why was the possession of inheritance determined by casting lots?

CASTING LOTS TO DIVIDE THE LAND OF CANAAN
(Joshua 14:1-5; 18:6-10; Numbers 26:53-56; 33:54;
34:13-29; Psalm 47:4; Ephesians 1:11,14,18; Colossians
1:12; 3:24; Hebrews 9:15)

After the conquest of Canaan, God directed Joshua to share the land for the children of Israel by lot. Earlier, Moses had given Joshua some guidelines on how the land should be shared among the various tribes (Numbers 26:53-56). In our text, we see the account of Joshua's obedience and full compliance with these instructions. He did not add nor diminish from all that Moses had commanded him.

Question 2: What major recurring lesson can believers learn from the life of Joshua?

A close look at the life of Joshua reveals that his life was full of absolute obedience to God's commandments. Obedience to God is the hallmark of a true believer. It is the unmistakable evidence that our love for Him is genuine; and it is the foundation of success in life and ministry. No wonder Jesus said: **"If ye love me, keep my commandments. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him"** (John 14:15,21). The truth is, we cannot truly confess Jesus as our Lord if we are in the habit of disobeying His commandments (Luke 6:46-49).

Question 3: Why is it improper for believers in the New Testament dispensation to use means such as casting lots in seeking guidance from God?

Though the Scriptures did not state explicitly how the lots were cast, the important thing is that God used this method to guide His people; and they respected the outcome as God's answer. However, in the New Testament dispensation, believers cannot revert to such means of guidance because our situation is quite different. We now have the full Canon of Scriptures and

the Holy Spirit has been given to guide and reveal the will of God to us. Today, if a believer wishes to know the mind of God or receive guidance on issues like choosing a life partner, choice of career, profession etc., he/she must pray, listen to the Holy Spirit and abide by what God has revealed on the subject in the Scripture.

The position of the Levites and the character of Moses pose challenges to present-day believers. The Levites were not given possession of land in Canaan because God is their inheritance. They were expected to detach their minds from earthly possessions and be preoccupied with their spiritual assignments in the tabernacle. Also, they were to be contented with whatever lean provisions that God might approve for them so long as they had the basic necessities of food, raiment and shelter. The fact that other Israelites had inheritance of land would not provoke or incite them against God's decision. Thus, the Levites were not to engage in carnal comparison of themselves with others.

It is also significant to note that though Moses was from the tribe of Levi, it was he who gave God's command concerning their inheritance. This is a proof that Moses was truly a disinterested and detribalized leader who did not exploit his position as Israel's leader to secure choice portions for his own tribe. The example of Moses is a model for leaders at all levels, both in the church and the society.

Also worthy of note is that in all the process of sharing the land by lot, God was the ultimate decider of the possession that fell to each tribe. This can be clearly seen in the prophetic statements of both Jacob and Moses who had described the kind of portion that some of the tribes would get as inheritance (Genesis 49:13; Deuteronomy 33:13-23). It was therefore no surprise that when the lots were cast, each tribe inherited the portion that God's Spirit had earlier revealed. Zebulun got coastal lands and Naphtali also got their inheritance towards the west and south (Joshua 19:10,32-39). The lesson here is that whatever means of guidance that God uses to lead us, there will always be harmony

between the written Word, the Holy Spirit and the revelation received.

CALEB'S CONFESSION OF FAITH AND REQUEST

(Joshua 14:6-12; Numbers 13:30; 14:6-10,24-38; 32:10-12; Deuteronomy 1:34-36; Mark 11:22-24; 2 Corinthians 4:13; Hebrews 11:1,2,6)

At the commencement of sharing the land, Caleb, in company of the elders of the tribe of Judah came to Joshua in Gilgal to present his request that Hebron be given to him. It would be observed that as at the time Caleb made this request some giants were still present there. Though the lowlands around Hebron had been conquered and the giants subdued, those who occupied the mountains were not driven out. It was therefore striking that Caleb made request to inherit such a portion that seemed a hard nut for the entire nation to crack.

Question 4: Point out some key lessons to be learnt from the character of Caleb and his demand for Hebron as a possession.

From the character of Caleb, particularly in his approach and confession before Joshua, we learn that he was a man of faith. As one of the twelve spies sent to view Canaan, only he and Joshua brought a positive report concerning the land. It is also noteworthy that while the entire congregation wandered in the wilderness for almost forty years because of unbelief, his faith endured the undue delay and hardship. The pressure of divine discipline did not crush his faith; rather, at the age of eighty-five, he was still demanding for a task that would require faith in God to accomplish. From the life of Caleb, we can see the ingredients of genuine faith in God: the confession of faith, the courage of faith, and the consistency of faith. We also see the patience of faith, preservation by faith and the product of faith. The faith of Caleb grew as he was able to forget the past, face the facts and foresee the future. Our faith will also grow if, like him, we look away from the giants, look up to God, and look ahead to the Promised Land.

Second, Caleb was a man who followed the Lord wholeheartedly and was consistent till old age. At forty years of age, he was not afraid of the giants in Canaan and still at eighty-five, he did not recoil at the prospects of confronting them in Hebron. We too must be consistent in faith and walk with God no matter how long we have been Christians.

Third, Caleb demonstrated submission to authority, deep humility, and openness before all. He came to Joshua with the elders of his tribe as an acknowledgment and a mark of respect for leadership. Though he was a contemporary of Joshua, he demonstrated submission to spiritual authority. Also, he did not approach Joshua in a secret manner, as if to hide his intentions from his tribal elders. He made his demand openly before them. Notwithstanding that Caleb was the official leader and representative of the tribe and was at least twenty years older than any other person from his tribe (Numbers 13:6; 34:16-19; 14:28-32), he still felt it necessary to take some of them with him in approaching Joshua. No doubt, there will be real unity and fellowship in the Church when believers learn to put aside carnal considerations and estimations of themselves, seeking nothing but only the will of God.

Four, Caleb's request for Hebron was in line with God's will. God had said, **"Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's forever, because thou hast wholly followed the LORD my God"** (Joshua 14:9). So, before the land would be shared by lot to others, he requested for a fulfillment of what had been revealed as the will of God concerning his life. There is a lesson for us here as believers concerning the revelation of God's will and prayer. Once a thing has been revealed in Scripture as God's will, a believer who is wholly following the Lord need not ask for any further revelation as to whether it is God's will or not, but only to pray and ask God to do as He has said. For Caleb, his own inheritance had been clearly stated and defined long before Israel conquered the land, and as such, there was no need

casting lots to determine his own portion. His request was according to the promise given to him. As believers, our prayers must align with God's promises and His revealed will concerning us. It is only as we make requests which are in line with God's will that we have a guarantee of receiving answer from the Lord. **"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us"** (1 John 5:14).

Five, we learn from the confession of Caleb to be thankful and demonstrate our appreciation of God's preservation of our lives. **"And now, behold, the LORD hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, since the LORD spoke this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old. As yet I am strong this day as I was in that day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in"** (Joshua 14:10,11). Six, the portion given to Caleb, that is Hebron, eventually became one of the cities of refuge in Israel (Joshua 20:1-7; 21:1-3,9-12). That means Caleb did not hold tight to his inheritance when God demanded to use it for a higher purpose. What he had obtained by faith he was also ready to release by faith. Indeed, genuine faith is not all about grabbing material things for ourselves but having an eye for God's will to be done. Eventually, Caleb retained some portion of Hebron as an inheritance for his posterity.

THE CO-OPERATION AND CONSENT OF JOSHUA TO CALEB'S REQUEST (Joshua 14:13-15; Philippians 2:3-11; Romans 12:10; Galatians 5:25,26; 1 Peter 5:5,6)

Joshua's response to the request of Caleb was positive. **"And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance"** (Joshua 14:13). By virtue of his position as the leader of Israel, Joshua blessed Caleb and granted his request to have Hebron for a possession.

Question 5: Comment on the kind of relationship that existed between Joshua and Caleb, and state the challenge it poses for believers today.

The response of Joshua to Caleb's request was a proof that a cordial relationship existed between them. There was no hint of rivalry or resentment between them. In fact, Joshua pronounced blessing upon Caleb and wished him well as he confronted the Anakims in Hebron.

Unlike Joshua and Caleb, it is not uncommon these days to observe subtle rivalry and mudslinging between people who are contemporaries in the church, particularly when one is assigned a higher office than others. The need for Christian leaders to maintain a cordial relationship and unity with one another cannot be over-emphasized. Regardless of title or position, there should be co-operation and mutual respect for one another. This is the only way we can please the Lord and get His work done.

Finally, the life of Caleb is an apt summary of the believer's life of faith. He began with a testimony of faith, spying the land of Canaan; then he went through a test of faith as he wandered in the wilderness with other Israelites; but eventually, as he followed the Lord wholeheartedly, he experienced the triumph of faith and settled in his own God-given inheritance. Similarly, believers shall triumph in faith and possess the inheritance which God has reserved for them in heaven if only they endure the present hardships and overcome seeming delays to their promised blessings. Through consistent life of faith and wholehearted following, believers will eventually possess their own eternal inheritance.

DAILY BIBLE READING

| MORNING | | | EVENING | |
|----------------|------|----|----------------|-------|
| MON | Acts | 13 | Exodus | 19-20 |
| TUE | " | 14 | " | 21-22 |
| WED | " | 15 | " | 23-24 |
| THUR | " | 16 | " | 25 |
| FRI | " | 17 | " | 26 |
| SAT | " | 18 | " | 27-28 |
| SUN | " | 19 | " | 29 |

END OF OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

578 Lesson

NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

LESSONS FROM ISRAEL'S SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

MEMORY VERSE: “Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off” (Romans 11:22).

TEXT: Romans 11:1-36

Paul, in the preceding chapters, had bemoaned Israel’s carnality, unbelief, rebellion and inexcusable failure to receive divine blessings by faith. In spite this, this chapter opens on a consolatory note: “...**Hath God cast away his people? God forbid...**” (Romans 11:1). Obviously, the national spiritual condition of unbelief did not foreclose the salvation of individuals who professed faith in Christ (Roman 1:16; 10:13). The Apostle is consoled by the fact that there are remnants that will be saved by grace, several instances of resistance by Jewish officials, notwithstanding.

Question 1: Cite examples from Scripture to show that God did not reject Israelites who exercised faith in Christ for salvation.

At the time of writing this epistle, there existed a vibrant church in Judea and other parts of the Israeli territory. Also, there were thousands of Grecian Christian Jews in the Diaspora (Galatians 1:20-24; Acts 11:1,18-21). Though comparatively few, these represented silver lining in the cloudy spiritual atmosphere of the nation, and furnish hope of successful outreach to others. Believers are called to always identify the positive side of any matter. Such an outlook will prevent a distortion of a situation, aid correct assessment, lead to adoption of appropriate strategies and strengthen our resolve to overcome potential challenges (Proverbs 17:22). Today’s text focuses on contrasts between faltering Israel and her faithful remnants, consequences of the nation’s

spiritual condition, warning for Gentile Christians and praise of God's wisdom for present Gentile incorporation into His fold and anticipated future Jewish restoration.

Question 2: How should a believer react to spiritual challenges in ministry?

“...I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace” (Romans 11:4,5).

God is more than eager to save souls of men from perishing in sin and hell. In all dispensations, His interest and involvement in the soul-saving efforts is never in doubt in spite of human misgivings. It is usually a wrong human perception and attitude that make the awful difference. Had Prophet Elijah known that there were faithful Jews who worshipped the true God in the land at his time, he might not have been so discouraged while doing divine bidding. Christian servants should be assured of God's faithfulness and commitment to building an invincible church over which the gates of hell shall not prevail. No matter how massive the hordes of hell and people who are living in sin, God will always save and preserve souls that will serve as His ambassadors, people who will advance his cause and lend helping hands to His frontline ministers. Contemporary believers should earnestly refuse the temptation to constrain God's work to their limited personal abilities. Rather, they should allow God to deploy His own potential to aid the success of their ministries.

CONTRAST BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE ELECT REMNANTS (Romans 11:5-10; 10:1-4,25; 3:1-3; 9:31-33; Isaiah 8:14-17; 10:21-22; Jeremiah 31:7; Zephaniah 3: 13; Jude 3-5)

As a nation, Israel had been greatly privileged especially because they descended directly from Jacob through whom God's covenant to make Abraham a great nation

was to be finally fulfilled. Also, they exclusively had the oracles of God, ministry of the prophets, the temple and the ordinances. For these, they felt superior to others and boasted of being God's favorites for eternal salvation. Unfortunately, they did not keep the terms of the covenant. They lost their distinctiveness as they mingled with neighboring idolatrous nations, corrupting themselves thereby. When physical discomforts resulted from divine judgment for their unfaithfulness, God usually intervened in answer to their cries. But, they were evidently more concerned with their physical well-being than their spiritual health. Resisting various attempts to correct this wrong impression, they persecuted virtually every prophet that called them to repentance. This ugly trend culminated in their national rejection of Christ, the Messiah.

Though the Jews affirmed uniqueness of Christ's conception, personality, doctrines, miracles, death and resurrection, they spurned the offer of God's salvation through faith. They openly rejected His call to salvation, disregarded His rebuke and rejected His kingship (Matthew 27:25; Mark 12:12; Luke 20:19; John 1:11). Preferring shadow to substance, their heart waxed gross, they became spiritually dumb and blind (Matthew 13:14,15; 15:14). This led to their national suspension from divine program; and the Lord lamented, **"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord"** (Matthew 23:37-39).

Question 3: What lessons can believers learn from Israel's spiritual blindness?

The case of Israel's spiritual blindness eminently testifies to the futility of superficial religiosity. Mere mental assent of God's attributes is not indicative of

true spirituality. The whole gamut of Old Testament sacrifices, ceremonies and ordinances do not guarantee salvation of the soul. Securing a relationship with God requires genuine repentance and simple faith in Christ's atonement for remission of all sins (Isaiah 29:10-13; Acts 16:30-31; 2 Corinthians 11:3; Hebrews 11:6).

Resisting God's will, way and word bring hardness of heart. If a person persists in unbelief, willful disobedience, stubbornness and other spiritual vices, the Holy Spirit can be so grieved that He departs. The absence of the Spirit's illuminating and restraining influence disposes one to full control of a domineering satanic power that deadens the conscience and damns the soul (Psalm 51:10-11, Isaiah 63: 10, Romans 1:28, 11:7-8, Ephesians 4:30). It is wise not to resist God before and after the salvation experience. Israel once knew God but they had perfected the art of spiritual inconsistency to justify their spiritual blindness. Anyone who forsakes the light will definitely grope in darkness.

The influence of bad leaders can impact negatively on a people. Most Israelite kings either led their subjects into idolatry or perpetuated them in it. The chief priests and elders persuaded the people to request for the crucifixion of Christ and placed a powerful trans-generational curse on the nation (Matthew 27:25). Therefore, we should pray for divine intervention in the appointment and administration of spiritual as well as political leaders (1 Timothy 2:1,2)

However, no matter how corrupt or ungodly a community, it is possible for an individual to change his spiritual status for good. God is ever willing to receive the sinner who repents, the backslider who returns, the hardened who humbles himself, the agnostic who truly expresses faith in the Lord and the religious who seeks righteousness through Christ (Ezekiel 18:21-23; Micah 6:8; Luke 23:39-43; John 3:1-3; Acts 9:3-6).

“What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded” (Romans 11:7).

The current situation does not translate to termination of God's concern for Israel with whom He first established a relationship. As the prophecy of the rejection was fulfilled, so is the promise of the redemption, not only of the Gentiles but also of the Jews who meet the requirements of a New Testament salvation experience. **"God has not cast away his people which he foreknew..."** (Romans 11:2).

Question 4: Explain God's foreknowledge as it relates to salvation of sinners.

It needs be understood that divine foreknowledge does not imply the concept of fatalism - the sovereign conditioning of a creature to falter or stand against his wish. Rather, it is God's supernatural consciousness of a person's reaction to a situation ahead of an event. In the matter of election, it refers to God's prior knowledge of how willing or negligent a person will be to appropriate grace made available for his salvation. People who would receive the gospel offer in simple faith, He accepts. After responding, God justifies, endues them with the divine nature to conform to the image of Christ and eventually glorifies them. This is the case with the elect remnant (Isaiah 45:22-24; Matthew 11:28; Acts 2:47; Romans 8:29,30; 2 Corinthians 6:2).

On the other hand, those who would utterly refuse the call to salvation, He judges; albeit with warning and sufficient opportunity of repentance so that they would be inexcusable. Therefore, each individual is primarily responsible for the way God relates with him (Genesis 18:19; 2 Samuel 14:14; Psalm 139: 1-2; Acts 2: 47; Romans 1:16-32).

CONSEQUENCES OF ISRAEL'S NATIONAL REBELLION (Romans 11:11-16; Acts 8:1-13; 13:46; 18:4-6; Ephesians 1:17,18)

Israel's rejection of Christ and the persecution of Christians could not stop the move of the Holy Spirit in the propagation of the gospel through human agencies.

Rather than fetter God's program, it furthers it, "...**but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles...**" (Romans 11:11,15).

Question 5: Outline the benefits Israel's rebellion afforded the world.

The persecution against believers in Jerusalem scattered the disciples abroad to preach in Samaria, to the Grecians and finally to the Gentile world. Through it, the gospel started its course to reach the utmost parts of the earth (Acts 4:18-21; 8:1-4; 11:19,20).

Besides, Israel's rebellion led to the reconciliation and salvation of the Gentile world, to the grafting of bad-natured Gentiles into the good God. As children, Gentiles became part of the commonwealth of Israel with a right to the covenant of promise and a privilege to partake of the divine nature (John 1: 12; Colossians 1:12; 2 Peter 1:3-5). Truly, there were instances of Gentiles who came to serve the living God like Rahab, Ruth, the Gibeonites, and other proselytes in the pre-gospel era. These were however fewer than the scale of repentance witnessed in the New Testament period. Therefore, Christian workers should continue to labor for the Lord with assurance that neither men nor demons can derail the program of God (Acts 15:12; 17:34).

The rebellion of Israel against the gospel makes possible the making of ministers of God from those who were once enemies (Acts 14:22; 20:4, Colossians 4:12,17). Above all, Israel's spiritual blindness has brought the revelation of divine riches, goodness, wisdom, knowledge, full assurance, holiness and glory for the Gentiles through the gospel (Romans 2:4; 9:31; 11:33; Ephesians 1:18; 3:16; Colossians 2:2). The gospel is the greatest wealth any person or nation can have. The rejection of it comes with a most pitiable misery (Revelation 3:17-19).

CAUTION AGAINST GENTILE CHRISTIAN'S APOSTASY (Romans 11:17-24; Deuteronomy 32:15; 1 Samuel 2:30; Psalm 111:10; Ezekiel 16:49; Luke 12:19-21; 1 Corinthians 3:21; 4:7; James 4:6-10)

As a loving father to his children, the apostle to the Gentiles proceeded to warn the Gentile church of the dangers of conceit and pride that could jeopardize this special privilege granted them by grace. Whatever one's status or attainment in any sphere of life, a believer has no basis to boast. "...**Be not high-minded, but fear...**" (Romans 11:20).

Question 6: Explain the scriptural fear recommended to Christians.

The Scripture enjoins godly fear which keeps one from sin. However, this does not imply a slavish disposition that makes one fidgety as to allow divine opportunities or privileges to fritter away. Neither is it a trepidation that deprives one of needed confidence to live up to the standard expectation afforded by God's grace. Rather, it is a conscious self-emptying and self-effacing character of a believer in spite of the deployment of one's full potential for the successful execution or prosecution of God's will (Luke 17:10).

This admonition reminds us of the impartiality of God. Currently, Israel is abandoned because of her unbelief and the Gentile church is beloved because of her subsisting faith. Should any Gentile Christian turn away from the faith, his lot may change to that of the Jewish nation. Christians are warned of the danger of inconsistency and the error of eternal security. Each believer must constantly maintain a living testimony of sound faith, sobriety, submission, and service for the Lord at all times (Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11; Colossians 3:25).

COMFORT ON ISRAEL'S FUTURE RESTORATION
(Romans 11:25-36; Isaiah 66:7; Zechariah 12:9-14; Romans 15:4)

Having been through with warning of the beloved Gentile church, the study returns to express comfort over the fact that the spiritual condition of Israel was only partial not total; dispensational not eternal, and exults in the future salvation of the nation. "**And so**

all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (Romans 11:26).

This is true in context of the prophetic repentant Jews at the Great Tribulation period who will seek the Lord by repentance and rigorous intercession for His return as their Messiah.

“Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy” (Romans 11:31).

As the Jews were instrumental for the commencement of the spread of the good news to Gentiles, so should the Gentile church respond to this subtle challenge to let the benefits of the gospel rebound unto Israel by sending missionaries and organizing outreaches targeted at the Jewish people both in their homestead and elsewhere within the globe. It is time for the Gentiles to get ready against all odds to preach the gospel to all men, including the Jews.

DAILY BIBLE READING

| | MORNING | | EVENING | |
|------|----------------|----|----------------|-------|
| MON | Acts | 20 | Exodus | 30 |
| TUE | “ | 21 | “ | 31 |
| WED | “ | 22 | “ | 32 |
| THUR | “ | 23 | “ | 33 |
| FRI | “ | 24 | “ | 34-35 |
| SAT | “ | 25 | “ | 36 |
| SUN | “ | 26 | “ | 37-38 |

579 Lesson

PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN LIVING

MEMORY VERSE: “But be ye doers of the word, not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (James 1:22).

TEXT: Romans 12:1-21

In the previous chapters of the epistles to the Romans, Paul, the inspired writer, focused on major theological and doctrinal details of our salvation in Christ. He dwelt extensively on the subjects of depravity, sinfulness and guilt of all men (chapters 1-3); justification by faith and forgiveness of sin through Christ (chapters 4,5); freedom from sin and victory over the flesh (chapters 6-8); election, sovereignty of God and universal salvation (chapters 9-11). But in the twelfth chapter, Paul moves from doctrinal exposition to issues of practical Christian living. Having laid the foundation of doctrines concerning what Christians should believe, he now points out practical guidelines on how believers should behave.

The implication of this transition from the doctrinal to the practical is obvious: as important as the foundation of sound doctrine is to the Christian faith, it is essential that believers put their knowledge of doctrine to action. Our knowledge of sound doctrine must be coupled with practical Christian living in order to make our faith a truly scriptural kind. Otherwise, to know or teach doctrine without practice will earn us a similar rebuke as Jesus gave the religious Pharisees of old **“For they say, and do not”** (Matthew 23:3b). Apostle James also warned of the danger of hearing doctrine, or knowing what the word of God says, without practical application. **“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and**

straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed” (James 1:22-25).

Question 1: Why is it important to couple the knowledge of sound doctrine with practical application?

THE CALL TO CONSECRATION AND SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION (Romans 12:1,2; 6:13; 1 Peter 2:5; Ephesians 4:22-24; 1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 John 2:15-17; James 4:4; 1:27)

Paul began this section on practical Christian living with an appeal to consecration and spiritual transformation. **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service”** (Romans 12:1). In view of all God has done to save us from sin and condemnation, the reasonable thing to do is to offer ourselves a living sacrifice to Him. A sacrifice is something completely devoted unto God.

In the Old Testament dispensation, the Jews were familiar with animal sacrifice. The sacrificial animal was overpowered, dragged to the altar and slain. In contrast, God wants believers in the New Testament to offer unto Him spiritual sacrifices, and one of the ways to do this is to come to Him of their own volition, lay themselves on the altar, become dead to sin, self and the world and then live unto God, doing His perfect will (Romans 12:1; 1 Peter 2:5). Just as the sacrificial animal offered unto God must be perfect and blameless, believers are expected to present themselves to God without blemish.

In practical terms therefore, the appeal to offer our bodies a living sacrifice unto God would demand that a believer makes a definite surrender of himself to God. The body must be kept holy and blameless, not defiled with immorality, intoxicants, idolatrous marks etc. If our body is defiled, it will not be acceptable to God.

Question 2: In practical terms, what does it mean for a believer to offer himself as a living sacrifice to God?

People who claim that God is only concerned about our spirit and not our bodies err. Our body is the contact point between the physical and the spiritual; and it is the part of our being through which we can demonstrate to the world the inner transformation that God's grace has accomplished in us. The truth is, God cares about our bodies and we are required to glorify Him both in our body and spirit (1 Corinthians 6:20). Thus, the intellect, voice, physical strength and every faculty of the body should be laid on God's altar.

In calling believers to present their bodies a living sacrifice to God, Paul the apostle harped on the mercy of God as the motivating factor. In other words, believers should not look upon consecration either as another means of getting favor from God, or of escaping punishment; but it should be seen as a necessary response to God's mercies which we have received. God's mercy was shown by giving His only begotten Son to die in our stead, thereby cancelling all our debt of sin and averting the eternal punishment we deserved. He also sent His Holy Spirit to guide our steps in the way of truth and to be our Helper. In view of these unmerited favors, and several other temporal blessings, we ought to offer ourselves a living sacrifice. This thought is in sharp contrast with the notion of most religious people who make sacrifices in order to obtain divine mercy.

Question 3: What should be the motivating factor for believers' consecration?

Presenting ourselves to God as a living sacrifice is the best way to prove our love for Him. Our profession of love and gratitude to God, whether expressed in songs, poems, prayer or testimony, will not mean much except we demonstrate it by yielding ourselves to Him as a living sacrifice. It is the evidence that we are truly grateful for His salvation and it is the most convincing acknowledgment of the Lordship of Jesus Christ in our lives.

Another component of being a living sacrifice is spiritual transformation of the believer and his non-conformity to the world. **“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God”** (Romans 12:2). Believers who are truly consecrated to God will not conform to this present world (or age).

The world is a threat to a believer’s new life in Christ. This is because Satan is the god of this age (2 Corinthians 4:4); and its ways, thoughts and values are diametrically opposed to the Spirit of God who controls the believer. Therefore, to maintain his consecration as a living sacrifice, a believer must refuse to be conformed to the pattern of this world. When a believer conforms to the world, he brings himself under the control of Satan and invariably becomes a partaker of the judgment of God upon the world. In a nutshell, conforming to the world makes a person the enemy of God (James 4:4).

Today, Satan puts a lot of pressure on believers to make them compromise. But the Scripture warns us against loving the world or the things that are in the world. The lusts and pride of this world are to be avoided by all heavenly-minded believers. We must not conform to the world in its practices, ideals, conduct or lifestyle. We must deliberately reject their carnal motivations, frivolity, ostentation, arrogance, selfishness and covetousness.

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| <p>Question 4: How can a believer overcome the pressure to conform to the world?</p> |
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Our text points out that the scriptural way to avoid being conformed to this present world is by being transformed through the renewal of the mind. This transformation is accomplished through the agency of the Holy Spirit as the believer engages in constant prayer, study and meditation on God’s word and rich fellowship with God’s children. It is only when we are transformed and our mind is renewed that we shall be able to reckon the will of God as good, perfect and acceptable.

CAUTION ON SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND THEIR OPERATIONS IN THE CHURCH (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-31; Ephesians 4:7-16; 1 Peter 4:10)

After the initial exhortation on personal consecration and non-conformity to the world, Paul pointed out the need for believers to recognize and use the gifts of God in their lives in a profitable way. He cautioned believers against being conceited in the estimation of their own gifts or looking down on the gifts of others in the body of Christ. God's gifts must not be misused or abused. A spiritual gift is a special ability given to a believer by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of edifying the Church. Such gifts are different from natural talents, though they may appear similar or even overlap in some cases. Natural talents are innate or inborn abilities, learned or acquired by training and practice; and they are common to all men whether saved or unsaved. However, spiritual gifts are non-hereditary, unlearned abilities given by the Holy Spirit to believers only.

Question 5: Point out some important scriptural facts concerning spiritual gifts.

On this subject, Paul emphasized that the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to believers according to His own sovereign will (1 Corinthians 12:11). Two, every believer has some spiritual gifts and they are interdependent on one another (Romans 12:6; 1 Peter 4:10). Three, the gifts are not the same for everyone; and even when two people have similar gifts, the level of manifestation and operations would likely differ, depending on their levels of faith. Four, there is danger of becoming proud because one possesses a particular gift (Romans 12:3; 1 Corinthians 12:14-31; 13:4; 14:12,20). Five, there is also the possibility of underestimating or being ignorant of one's gift, thereby neglecting to use it and depriving the Church of its benefits (1 Timothy 4:14). Six, a believer can desire and ask God for some particular gifts that will help him fulfill God's purpose in his life and ministry. Solomon asked for wisdom and God gave him. As believers, we are exhorted to **“covet earnestly the**

best gifts.” “Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy” “wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret” (1 Corinthians 14:1,13). Seven, the gifts are for building the body of Christ and not for personal exploitation. Eight, the exercise of spiritual gifts should not degenerate into a circus show or sheer exhibition whereby a deliberate effort is made to draw attention to the gift and the one who has received it rather than to God, the Giver. Nine, exercise of spiritual gifts should develop hand-in-hand with the fruit of the Spirit in a believer’s life (Galatians 5:22,23). Exercising spiritual gifts without a corresponding growth and stability in holiness will bring eternal damnation. Concerning such people, Jesus said, “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity**” (Matthew 7:22,23).**

Paul the apostle mentioned some spiritual gifts in our text. This list is by no means exhaustive but examples of how we should use whatever special abilities we have received from God for the benefit of the entire Church. The gifts of prophecy, ministering, teaching, exhortation, giving, ruling and showing mercy are mentioned while other passages in the New Testament identify other gifts as well (1 Corinthians 12:8-10; Ephesians 4:11).

Question 6: Mention some spiritual gifts as identified in our text.

It should be noted that though some individuals are gifted in specific areas of ministry in the Church, every believer should still fulfill his/her personal obligations in other areas as well. For instance, every believer should give generously and cheerfully in support of God’s work. The essence of spiritual gifts in those specific areas is to enable the gifted ones to go beyond the limit of the average believer and to render exceptional benefit to the body of Christ. Anything contrary would mean a gross

misunderstanding of the concept of spiritual gifts in the Church.

The gift of ministering would include general services of deacons or business elders in the Church - ushering, security, etc.

CHRISTIAN CONDUCT AND RELATIONSHIPS IN THE COMMUNITY (Romans 12:9-21; Amos 5:15; Philippians 2:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; Hebrews 13:1,2; Matthew 5:44-48; Proverbs 3:4; 20:22; 25:21-22)

The later part of our text deals with practical exhortations on Christian conduct and inter-personal relationships. In this section, Apostle Paul gives scriptural guidelines to instruct believers on how to relate with others in the church and the community. First, he pointed out the centrality of genuine love as we relate with others. He said, **“Let love be without dissimulation”**. That means our love to God and other people should be sincere. To pretend to love other people is tantamount to hypocrisy. We must, therefore, love in deed and in truth. Our love for one another should exclude all forms of deceptive gestures, insincere compliments or flattery, self-seeking and the tendency to belittle others; rather, we should take delight in honoring one another in a genuine manner.

Another practical admonition here is to **“abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good”**. A believer should not only avoid doing evil, he should hate it. To abhor evil has to do with a mind-set that sees sin as disgusting. There are people who refrain from doing evil chiefly because they are afraid of the consequences and not because they see it as something to be repudiated. In their hearts, they love to do it but because of fear of men and other considerations, they struggle to keep away. True believers should see sin, whether in principle or practice, as very loathsome and offensive to God.

Believers are also enjoined not to be slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. We must never be lazy either in our secular employment or in God’s work. We must maintain a balanced approach between our

secular employment and Christian service such that one does not hinder the other. Today, it is disheartening to see many believers exhibit coldness and negligence in their service to God. The fervency of Spirit that characterized the beginning of their Christian journey has fizzled out with time.

God expects His children to wake from their slumber and manifest zeal in prayer, meeting the needs of the poor and showing hospitality to one another. One of the distinctive of our fellowship is caring for the needy and bearing one another's burden. It is sad that these days many of us have become individualistic and callous towards our suffering brethren. But God enjoins us to **“distribute to the necessity of saints”** and even when we don't have material things to give to the needy people, our zeal should drive us into fervent intercession for them. We should **“rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep”**.

Question 7: What are the scriptural injunctions to believers who are facing tribulations or persecutions?

The last section of our text points out how Christians should respond to persecution and ill-treatment from others. The fact that we are serving the Lord fervently does not insulate us from tribulations or persecutions. In fact, the Scriptures contain repeated warnings that in the world believers would face tribulations. However, we are enjoined to be patient in tribulation and to maintain a non-retaliatory attitude towards our persecutors. **“Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Recompense to no man evil for evil”** (Romans 12:14,17a).

These practical instructions should not be forgotten or neglected by Christians, especially in the face of widespread provocation in the society, and a growing retaliatory attitude among many believers. Though this passage is not a teaching on pacifism in times of national or international aggression, it teaches believers to maintain a positive attitude towards their persecutors. It requires that believers prove the strength of their faith by

overcoming evil with good. This would demand a forgiving spirit, readiness to go an extra mile in relationships, and a strong disposition to live peaceably with others, even though it costs us a great deal to achieve. The only caution here is that there should be no compromise on scriptural standard in our quest to live peaceably with all men. We cannot afford to make peace with the enemy at the expense of our own soul.

DAILY BIBLE READING

| MORNING | | | EVENING | |
|----------------|------|--------|----------------|-----|
| MON | Acts | 27 | Exodus | 39 |
| TUE | “ | 28 | “ | 40 |
| WED | “ | Rom. 1 | Lev. | 1-2 |
| THUR | “ | 2 | “ | 3-4 |
| FRI | “ | 3-4 | “ | 5-6 |
| SAT | “ | 5-6 | “ | 7 |
| SUN | “ | 7 | “ | 8 |

580 Lesson

BELIEVERS' DUTIES TOWARDS CIVIL AUTHORITY

TEXT: Romans 13:1-7

MEMORY VERSE: "Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor" (Romans 13:7).

The believer's duties towards civil authority has been a subject of controversy among many believers. For some people, the issue of maintaining proper relationship between the secular state and the individual Christian as well as the church, is controversial.

Fortunately, the Bible provides definite guides on the believer's duties and responsibilities towards civil authorities. Christians who live by scriptural injunctions in this area make the gospel of Christ attractive; it projects such believers as valuable ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ in the world.

The period when Apostle Paul wrote the epistle to the Romans was not so far from the period when (in AD 58) Claudius made the law that banished the Jews from Rome; and possibly, the believers too were affected by the law. There was therefore a need for caution because believers could be accused of encouraging people to rebel against constituted authority.

Considering this, the apostle therefore needed to carefully educate the believers to ensure they understand that, in spite of the great spiritual privileges which salvation has given them, it was also necessary that they are subject to the powers of government provided they do not contradict the word of God.

BIBLICAL SUBJECTION TO CIVIL AUTHORITY
(Romans 13:1,5; Titus 3:1,2; Luke 20:25; 1 Timothy 2:1-4; 1 Peter 2:17; Acts 23:1-5)

Question 1: What should be the correct attitude and approach of the believer towards civil authorities?

The text opens with command to all believers, not only in the Roman church but also in all generations, to consciously submit to rules of civil authority. **“Let every soul be subject to higher powers”**. This is the will of God for every believer. God’s commandment, directing the believer on proper ways of conducting themselves towards magistrates and people who are in civil authority reveals God’s purpose of ensuring a peaceful human society that will be conducive to the propagation of the gospel.

People who occupy political offices, such as presidents, kings and governors as well as their appointees saddled with the responsibility of governance and maintaining law and order for the good of the people are called **“higher powers”** in our text. They are so-called because of the dignity and honor attached to their office, not the individual in position of authority. Without maintaining high regard for them, the duties of the office would be trivialized, scandalized and disregarded. Even where occupiers of civil offices are wicked and vile (Psalm 15:4), the scripture enjoins believers to still submit and obey their authority.

Apostle Paul’s attitude in this regard is worth emulating. Even when he was maltreated contrary to the tenets of the law on the order of the high priest, Ananias, he practically respected him by apologizing for his caustic comment about him. Having known also that his messages would come into the hands of people in civil authority, he was very careful with the content and tone of his epistles to avoid inciting people to rebel against civil authorities. The gospel is not and cannot be the source of chaos in any society.

Question 2: State the practical implications of the scriptural subjection to civil authorities.

To be subject to civil authority imply, firstly, that believers should not speak evil of people in authority nor maintain a critical attitude towards them. Such acts will amount to operating outside the Great Commission which Christ has directed the church to embark upon as its primary assignment.

Secondly, it implies obedience to secular laws. Believers should be law-abiding citizens of their country. Since the fruit of the spirit of Christ that dwells in believers include righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, it would be scandalous for a believer to be caught breaking the law.

Thirdly, in social interactions and conduct, believers are expected to demonstrate a higher level of morality (Matthew 5:20). It is obvious that Christianity prescribes a higher level of morality than secular laws dictate.

Fourthly, believers should not be involved in rebelling or encouraging other people to act against civil authorities. In Titus 3:1,2, the Bible instructs us to be **“subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men”**.

Fifthly, believers should be subject to civil authority in the area of fulfilling civil responsibilities, such as respect for the country’s national symbols or objects of identity, such as national flag, pledge, anthem, payment of taxes, duties and rates, voting during elections; partaking in public sanitation; obeying curfews, fulfilling immigration and registration processes for the church, personal matters and the like. People who take loans from government agencies, for instance, should not regard them as God’s special provision or their own share of the ‘national cake’. They must pay back. Christian convictions and obligations should not be excuses to dodge fulfillment of civil obligations, such as payment of taxes.

Question 3: What do you understand by rendering unto Caesar what is Caesar's?

This is what the Lord meant when the Pharisees attempted to make Him offend the Roman government. Their motive was to confuse the religious requirement of the Law of Moses and the obligation to pay tax. **“And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's”** (Luke 20:25).

Sixthly, subjection implies respect for people in authority by giving them due honor that is ascribed to their office. **“Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king”**.

Finally, believers also support civil authorities by bringing divine intervention to bear in their affairs through constant prayer and intercession. **“I Exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth”** (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

Note however that subjection does not involve giving up our salvation and eternal inheritance in order to satisfy civil authorities. Sometimes, people in higher authorities may deliberately restrict believers from enjoying basic freedom of speech, association, etc. in order to curtail the preaching of the gospel. In such situation, a believer must be ready to obey God rather than man. Rather than disobey God, the believer should count that as persecution and accept to suffer the consequences. When the religious authority in the land commanded that early apostles not to preach or teach in Christ's name, **“Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men”**.

DANGERS OF REBELLION AGAINST CIVIL AUTHORITY: (Romans 13:2,3,5; Ezra 7:26; 10:8; 1 Peter 4:15; Act 24:16; 1 Timothy 4:12; Matthew 5:16)

It is clear from the text that the scripture does not support any form of rebellion against civil authority. In recent times, we have been experiencing public riots, protests and disruption of public peace in various places across the world. The fact that such acts are becoming rampant and acceptable does not mean that they are scriptural.

A genuinely-born again Christian would prefer to be rewarded for actions carried out in line with biblical principles instead of being punished for rebellion. A heaven-bound pilgrim should not follow the multitude to do evil. Riots, open strikes and destruction of public and private properties should not appeal to a true believer, whose life is directed by the Prince of peace.

Question 4: What dangers does rebellion against civil authority pose to a believer?

The Bible condemns rebellion against civil authority. **“Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation”** (Romans 13:2). Believers should disregard real or imagined temporal gains of rebellion and continue to obey God by remaining in subjection to civil authorities.

Secondly, believers who rebel against civil authority may face serious suffering which are not in line with biblical principles. Civil powers do not bear the sword in vain, and they have the coercive powers of this world’s government to enforce their authority to punish evil doers or people who break the law (Romans 13:4). Imagine a society without law agents, such as police, custom officers or civil authorities. Considering the human nature and its natural inclination to do evil, people will break laws, partake in illegal and atrocious acts such as murders, armed robberies, rapes, lawless driving, drug trafficking and embezzling of public funds. If there are no

law agents to deter crimes, people will misbehave to the point that will make society to become uninhabitable. In the end, people will not be able to live peaceful and quiet lives that are essential for the propagation of the gospel. In the context of enforcing and maintaining law and order, the Bible describes civil powers as ministers of God. And suffering for breaking the law should not be heard of acclaimed followers of Christ and ministers of the gospel. **“But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil doer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters”** (1 Peter 4:15).

Thirdly, it is important that believers avoid anything that would defile their conscience. Believers should therefore obey civil authority not only because they want to avoid being caught or arrested by law enforcement agents. There are people who make all attempts to evade rather than obey the law; they feel that they are alright just because they believe and know that Almighty God is judge of all. Subjection, for a believer therefore, is not just to avoid being caught but to keep a clear conscience. **“Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake”** (Romans 13:5). The danger of a defiled conscience far outweighs the pains of temporal punishment. **“And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men”** (Act 24:16).

Lastly, a rebellious person is not qualified to be described as good example the believer is meant to be (1 Timothy 4:12). Thus, he becomes a stumbling block to people who are contemplating surrendering their lives to the Lord. As believers, our lives should reflect the glory of the living Christ who saved us and now dwells in us so that God will be glorified (Matthew 5:16).

BASES AND BENEFITS OF BELIEVERS’ SUBJECTION TO CIVIL AUTHORITY (Romans 13:1,2,4-7; 2 Peter 1:16,19; John 19:10,11)

In our text, the bases of our subjection to civil authority are carefully explained while the benefits are clearly stated. The teachings of the Bible provide us the right

platforms on which to base our convictions. **“For we have not followed cunning devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. We have also a more sure word of prophesy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts”** (2 Peter 1:16,19).

Question 5: What are the biblical reasons a believer should be subject to civil authorities?

The Bible gives us the basis for our submission to civil authority. Since we believe that power belongs to God, no one therefore can exercise civil authority without the knowledge and permission of God. Christ affirmed this truth during His trial. **“Then said Pilate unto him, speakest thou not to me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above...”** (John 19:10,11). That perception - *the powers that be* - are ordained of God, simply means that it is God who permits worldly government to operate as part of His arrangement for humanity. It will act as a probationary period between the fall of man and the re-establishment of Christ’s direct government on earth.

People who are entrusted with civil power and authority must always remember the divine source of their power. Failure to do so will make them violate scripture principles by which they should comport themselves and will make them to be exposed to punishment from God. King Herod, for instance, was struck to death by an angel and began to rot immediately because he did not give God the glory. Nebuchadnezzar also spent seven years of his exalted throne in the forest. He lived like an animal until he acknowledged that God Almighty has the ultimate and supreme power over the affairs of men (Daniel). So, everyone in authority needs to heed divine counsel that **“...He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God** (2 Samuel 23:3).

Believers who obey and live by the rule of civil authority should know that they do so in obedience to God, provided they are in accordance with biblical principles. Secondly, civil authority should not be perceived negatively. Truly, there could be civil authorities in the hands of evil men, whose style of administration can make people feel uncomfortable in the society. However, irrespective of the unpleasant situations they create, activities of civil authorities are permitted by God in order to reward good deeds as well as punish evil doers, thereby ensuring that society is properly administered with appropriate checks and balances.

Continual obedience to civil authority will ensure peace and orderliness in society. It would therefore provide good and conducive environment for preaching the gospel and nurturing of young converts. Additionally, it will make believers to have a conscience void of offence towards God and men. They will be saved from suffering hardship that is not in accordance with the scripture. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were delivered from the fiery furnace and the lion's den. Aside deliverance from unjustifiable and malicious treatment, obedience to civil authority will make people to see believers as models of moral standard to be emulated. This would go a long way to beautify the gospel of Christ and draw people to God's kingdom.

DAILY BIBLE READING

| MORNING | | EVENING | |
|----------------|------------------------|------------------------|--|
| MON | Rom. 8 | Lev. 9-10 | |
| TUE | “ 9 | “ 11-12 | |
| WED | “ 10-11 | “ 13 | |
| THUR | “ 12-13 | “ 14 | |
| FRI | “ 14-15 | “ 15 | |
| SAT | “ 16 | “ 16 | |
| SUN | 1 Cor. 1-2 | “ 17-18 | |

581 Lesson

LOVE AND LIGHT OF CHRIST-LIKE BELIEVERS

MEMORY VERSE: “Owe no man anything, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law” (Romans 13:8).

TEXT: Romans 13:8-14

The earlier part of the present chapter deals with Christians’ civil responsibilities. This is coming after the great Apostle has expounded on the practical doctrines that affect the daily life of the believer in the preceding chapter (chapter 12). He then proceeds from our duty to God and ourselves, to subjection to the government and lawful authorities, and back again to the subject of love and sobriety of believers as people who must abhor all works of darkness and remain glowing lights in this evil world.

Our Lord spent ample time on the subject of love during His earthly ministry. His coming to the world to execute the plan of our redemption was a product of God’s love for humanity, the demonstration of which made Christ to die in our place on the cross of Calvary. **“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”** (John 3:16). The good news, the gospel truth that He brought was delivered with love, passion and compassion. He had the truth on one hand and love on the other. These are essential ingredients of His message to the world. The two must go hand-in-hand. We must not love someone and be afraid to tell him or her the gospel truth.

Love is a debt a Christian owes everybody and it must be paid at all cost. **“Owe no man anything, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law”** (Romans 13:8). The main idea here is that we must be constrained by love to have concern for both the physical and spiritual welfare of our neighbors.

CHRIST-LIKE LOVE: A DEBT OWED BY EVERYONE

(Romans 13:8-10; 1 Corinthians 13:8; Proverbs 25:21,22; Romans 12:20; John 13:35; Matthew 5:43-47; 22:37-39; Psalm 37:21)

Paul, continuing on the train of Christian duties now turns to our duty as Christians one towards another.

Question 1: What is the greatest commandment? How can you explain the word "love"?

God's love, being the highest form of love and by which all other shades of love are measured, can be said to be an earnest desire and interest in the well-being of the one being loved. It pursues and works for the welfare of its beneficiary (Romans 13:10).

Love is the basis of divine law. It is the duty that cannot and must not fail among believers (1 Corinthians 13:8). We are serving a good Master that has summed up all our duty in one word – love.

Our demonstration of love should be all-embracing. One, we are to love all men and not discriminate when showing it. Even our Lord Jesus Christ says: "**If ye (only) love them which love you... what do ye than others**" (Matthew 5:46,47). Many Christians are labeled as wicked because they think love must be shown only to fellow brothers and sisters and not to other people outside the fold. Yet, we are enjoined to increase and abound in love toward all men. We are also to follow peace with all men. It is by establishing friendship and showing hospitality to unbelievers that we can get their attention and win them over for the Lord. We can hardly win someone we cannot share even our smile with.

Two, we are to specially love brothers and sisters in the Lord. "**By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another**" (John 13:35). We are to do good especially to them who are of the household of faith. Examples of unusual love and admiration abound between David and Jonathan, Jesus and the rich young ruler, Jesus and Lazarus.

Three, we are to demonstrate God's love even to our foes. **"Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shall heap coals of fire on his head. Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good ...That ye may be the children of your Father"** (Romans 12:20; Matthew 5:44,45). A challenge is posed to us by the Good Samaritan who saw a wounded man and had compassion on him (Luke 10:33-37). So, as Christians who have been commissioned by Christ to win others, we must extend love even to those who consider themselves as our enemies.

Question 2: State the categories of people we should show love to. What should be the extent of such love?

Due payment of debts is one of the focuses of this study. That is to say, all just debts must be paid (Romans 13:8). Do not continue in any one's debt, while you are able to pay it because it is evil to borrow and refuse to pay. **"The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth"** (Psalm 37:21). Although the Bible does not forbid borrowing, it certainly discourages the practice - **"...the borrower is servant to the lender"** (Proverbs 22:7). Borrowing is always presented in a negative or cautionary view. One quality of a Christian is that he does not indulge in indiscriminate or unnecessary borrowing to the extent that he cannot fulfill his obligation to himself, his family and to the church. The practice of getting loans for projects and signing over collaterals beyond one's capacity is unwise. Inability to pay tithes and offerings because of the burden of loans is evil. It is incurring God's wrath and curse which will eventually lead to failure. Therefore, the scripture admonishes: **"Be not thou one of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts. If thou hast nothing to pay, why should he take away thy bed from under thee?"** (Proverbs 22:26,27).

About lending, the Bible says, **"a good man sheweth favor, and lendeth: he will guide his affairs with discretion"** (Psalm 112:5). Christian believers who lend

to others should bear in mind scripture injunctions not to be exploitative or take advantage of the less-privileged ones. The rich believer may even overlook a debt that is fast becoming a snare to the poor one. After all, we have the greatest debt paid and cancelled on our behalf by our Lord Jesus Christ. We must be charitable and help one another as much as we can (Galatians 6:10).

Question 3: Mention some things believers should bear in mind when it comes to lending and borrowing?

Living up to what Jesus called the greatest commandment ensures that every duty to man required by God's law or the civil law will be fulfilled; because, if we love others, we will not do anything that will harm or cause them sorrow. **"For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"** (Romans 13:9).

The two tablets of the law containing the Ten Commandments included four requirements concerning man's duty to God and six concerning man's duty to men. Except for the one regarding man's duty to his parents, all of those on the second tablet are listed here by Paul as being summed up in the greatest commandment. No duty will be neglected if only love is the rule. **"...Therefore love is the fulfilling of the law"** (Romans 13:10).

Love prompts justice, truth, and benevolence. Jesus declared that it is the spring of the whole law - He knows of the positive and uplifting qualities of love. If practiced with all diligence, love will have overriding influence over the many plans of fraud and dishonesty on the business and commercial activities of people.

On the other hand, hatred is like poison that destroys from within, producing bitterness that eats away at our hearts and mind. It destroys the personal witness of a Christian because it removes him from fellowship with

the Lord and other believers. In fact, so terrible is the position of hate before God that a man who hates is said to be walking in darkness (1 John 2:9). Every Christian must therefore love everyone, including sinners so that they can be won to the Lord; because, love is the key that opens men's hearts.

Question 4: Explain what is meant by "love is the fulfilling of the law".

CHRISTIAN WATCH: A CONSTANT EXPECTATION TILL CHRIST COMES (Romans 13:11-14; Mark 13:35-37; 1 Peter 5:8; John 9:4)

"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light" (Romans 13:11,12). This is a call to watchfulness against temptations and worldly activities. More so, we are to be in constant watch over our souls and the souls of others because our journey's end, when the glory of our salvation will be revealed, is very near. We are to live in holiness and shine as light in this world of darkness and gloom knowing that the coming of the Lord is at hand. The exhortation **"to awake out of sleep"** is addressed to everyone – saints and sinners alike.

The call is also of great relevance to sinners especially those who refuse to surrender their lives to Christ despite countless messages they have heard. Sinners are to awake out of the sleep of sin, carnal security, sloth and negligence; and out of the sleep of spiritual death and deadness. Believers on the other hand are to awake from spiritual slumber, because the devil is on the outlook for whom to devour.

The more the Master is expected, the more diligent ought the servants to be in working, watching, and keeping themselves in readiness. Believers should be busy with living right, admonishing fellow believers, and preaching to sinners to give their lives to Christ.

They are to watch and live in constant expectation of the coming of our Lord.

This, therefore, presupposes that many Christians are asleep. They are inactive and idle, and are doing nothing to prepare the way of the Lord. Now is the time to awake to our Christian duties. This is a perilous time, and the Master is calling us to the duty of soul-winning and *Discipling A Whole Nation (DAWN)*. Souls are perishing. The Lord Himself says: **“I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work”** (John 9:4). We have slept enough; it is time to wake up because we are in the midst of enemies, and so we must not only pray, but also engage in spiritual warfare.

Question 5: Why must sinners and believers awake out of sleep?

Christians who are thus awakened are to **“cast off the works of darkness”**. They are to put off everything that will not bear the light and to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Or how shall we abide in the day of our Lord’s coming if we do not, by divine help, separate ourselves from sin – rioting, drunkenness, chambering, wantonness, strife or envy?

CHRISTIAN WALK: A CALL TO SHUN ALL WORKS OF DARKNESS (Romans 13:12-14; Colossians 3:10-17; Galatians 3:27; 5:16-23; Ephesians 4:24-32; 1 John 1:5-7)

Apostle Paul used the term “walk” to mean the lifestyle of a believer occasioned by conversion to Christ and having a strong personal relationship with God. It is Christ living His life in and through the believer. Having once walked in darkness of sin, fear, trouble and hopelessness, a change has come that makes the believer to become a better person, husband, wife, father, employer, or employee. Now as a saved person, the believer is to walk in the light, worthy of the calling which he has in Christ, keeping the commandments of God, walking in lowliness and truth, and abiding in the doctrine of the Lord.

Question 6: What does it mean to put on Christ?

Having cast off the works of darkness, we are to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. **“That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers”** (Ephesians 4:22-25,29). To put on Jesus Christ is first, to identify with Him by being baptized in water (by immersion) (Galatians 3:27). This shows our identification with the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ (Galatians 6:4). Christian baptism is a dedication to follow the Lord and to be His disciple.

Now as children of God, we must make a covenant with God to submit ourselves to obey the Spirit of God, dying to the deeds and lusts of the flesh. Second, as believers, we must put on Christ by showing forth the qualities of love, compassion, truthfulness, service and humility. Jesus, therefore, is to be our clothing and adornment. We are to be arrayed in the pure, spiritual garment which He alone provides. We must not let our past sinful lives interfere with our present commitment.

As Christians, we are not to love worldly things, but present our bodies as living sacrifices, giving all the glory to God. Our love for others must be in deed and in truth (1 John 3:18). We must also set examples for other Christians **“in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity”** (1 Timothy 4:12). We must avoid doing things that would cause a weaker brother or sister to stumble.

Thus, we must be examples, and shine as light in a world of darkness (Matthew 5:14-16). We must be examples

for our children to emulate. From observing our family life, men and women are going to see the real meaning of Christian conversion. From what they see in our lives, they are going to become either more interested in or less attracted to Christ. Let us be Christians that are known for righteousness, faithfulness, love, service and self-control; let us please God and **“walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God”** (Colossians 1:10).

DAILY BIBLE READING

| MORNING | | | EVENING | |
|----------------|--------|-----|----------------|-------|
| MON | 1 Cor. | 3-4 | Leviticus | 19 |
| TUE | “ | 5-6 | “ | 20-21 |
| WED | “ | 7 | “ | 22 |
| THUR | “ | 8-9 | “ | 23 |
| FRI | “ | 10 | “ | 24 |
| SAT | “ | 11 | “ | 25 |
| SUN | “ | 12 | “ | 26 |

582 Lesson

THE BELIEVER'S RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS WEAK BRETHREN

MEMORY VERSE: "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations" (Romans 14:1).

TEXT: Romans 14:1-23

In the preceding chapter, Paul the apostle emphasized the responsibilities of believers towards civil rulers and the need to fulfill the royal law of love towards one another. But after dealing with this general application, he now continued his exhortation on believers' practical responsibility of love, this time, towards the weak brethren.

At the time Paul wrote the epistle to the Romans, there were some believers in the church who were over-scrupulous on dietary laws and observance of ceremonial regulations. He referred to such people as being "**weak in the faith**". These were people who, though had come to believe in Jesus Christ as Savior, still held on to their past traditions of abstaining from some kinds of meat and regarding some days as special or sacred. They had not come to a full understanding of their liberty in Christ, not knowing that by virtue of Christ's work of redemption a believer is delivered from the legalistic and ceremonial observances of the Old Testament dispensation. But on the other hand, there were some 'strong believers' who had no such personal scruples on diet or ceremonial laws. They understood their Christian liberty properly but their problem was that they felt they could exercise that liberty in an unrestrained manner.

This divergence of opinions, arising out of differences in background and pre-Christian exposure produced an explosive situation which threatened the unity of the Church. Therefore, Paul the apostle had to address this issue in particular and, in so doing, laid down some

scriptural principles of conduct to guide our behavior in respect of doubtful or indifferent matters in the Church.

From our text, three basic principles can be identified: One, believers should be considerate of others while doing what they believe is right. This is the principle of consideration for others. Two, each believer must be convinced about the rightness or wrongness of what he does. Here we have the principle of personal conviction. Three, as believers, we must be cautious not to violate our conscience or that of others by the things we do. We can call this the principle of pure conscience.

Question 1: Who are the people described as “weak believers” in our text?

THE PRINCIPLE OF CONSIDERATION FOR WEAK BRETHREN IN THE CHURCH (Romans 14:1-4,7-19; 15:1-3; 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; 9:19-23; Galatians 5:13)

The apostle Paul began by addressing the strong believers to receive those who are weak but not to doubtful disputations. That means believers should have fellowship together and not allow their differences of opinions on non-essentials of the Christian life to bring about sharp criticisms or division. This admonition became necessary because there were some gray areas of the Christian life on which the Bible is not specific. Then there are those issues that border on cultural practices which may not be binding on people who belong to other cultures; as well as those that may arise as a result of inability to make a proper transition from the Old Testament dispensation to the New.

The believers in the Roman church exemplified this divergence of opinions that often exist in the Church over matters that are not moral in nature or upon which the Bible has no clearly defined rule. There are believers who, because of their background and exposure, find it difficult to embrace their full liberty in Christ and, as such, they still hold on to some restrictions placed upon them by their former manner of life. In our text, such weak brethren regarded certain meats as unclean

and for that reason they abstained from eating meat altogether. They also held some days, such as Sabbath days, feast or fast days, as sacred and different from other days. They had not come to the understanding that the dietary regulations of the Old Testament as well as the ceremonial laws have been abolished because the purpose they served have been fulfilled in Christ. They were only a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ (Colossians.2:16,17).

But on the other hand, the strong brethren ate all kinds of meat and they regarded all days of the week as equal and to be used for God's glory. They had a deeper understanding of Christ's sacrificial death and its implications for believers.

To solve this problem, Paul the apostle had to caution the strong believers to be considerate of the weak brethren in exercising their liberty. In giving this caution, Paul affirmed the liberty of Christians and the abrogation of legalistic observances. He said: **"I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean"** (Romans 14:14). But notwithstanding this affirmation, he admonished the strong believers to rather deny themselves of their liberty in order to accommodate their weak brethren. His primary goal was to promote unity and fellowship in the Church inasmuch as the issues at stake are not foundational or doctrinal

Question 2: Mention some of the areas where believers must apply the principle of consideration for the weak ones in the Church, and state the reasons for doing so.

The scriptural perspective and guidelines given by Apostle Paul here is applicable to all the gray areas of the Christian life that often create unnecessary tension in the Church. Paul urged the stronger brethren who had a better grasp of the fact that none of these unimportant aspects of life could commend or condemn us before God to consider and bear with the weaker ones who did not have such understanding. The strong

should not hold the weak in contempt; neither should the weak pass critical judgment on the strong.

One reason apostle Paul advanced for his admonition is that both the strong and weak believers are servants of Christ, and only He has the prerogative of balanced judgment on the actions of His people. Instead of criticizing or judging other believers, each of us should rather prepare for the day we would stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give account of all our actions, **“for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.”** (Romans 14:10b) The only kind of judgment God allows us to make, as believers, is our own self-judgment. Each believer is to reprimand himself/herself and correct those areas of his/her life that needs straightening out before Christ calls us to give account of our lives and stewardship (Romans 14:11-13; 2 Corinthians 5:10). As a matter of fact, we cannot judge the actions of our fellow men in matters that are inconsequential to faith in Christ because we may not be able to discern their motives and intentions. Therefore, instead of making an issue about our apparent differences of opinions, children of God should give room for mutual expression of their convictions in Christ and derive the strength that comes from unity in diversity.

But another reason for mutual consideration among believers is that no believer is an island to himself/herself. **“For none of us liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself”** (Romans 14:7). Our lives are inseparably linked with others in the Christian family, and we are all connected to Christ who is the Head (Romans 12:4,5; 1 Corinthians.12:12-27).

Also, believers in Christ must be guided by the rule of love in every aspect of life. Strong believers would not be demonstrating Christian charity if they exercised their liberty to the detriment of the weak brethren. We all know that in the Church the members are at different levels of spiritual maturity and not all would think alike on matters where the Bible is not absolutely specific on the course of action to take.

PERSONAL CONVICTIONS WITHOUT BREAKING THE LAWS OF CHRIST (Romans 14:5,6; 1 Corinthians 8:9-11; Acts 10:9-20,28,29,34,35; 11:1-18; 15:7-11; Galatians 2:11-18)

Apart from the warning that strong believers should be considerate of the weak ones, Apostle Paul also emphasized the need for believers to have personal convictions concerning what they hold to be right or wrong. **“Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind”** (Romans 14:5). Here the apostle would have believers know that their actions must proceed out of godly convictions and not in response to the waves of public opinion. Too many believers are easily swayed by what they see other people do or by the opinion of the majority. They simply lack personal conviction based on scriptural foundation.

Question 3: Point out the danger of lack of conviction in a believer’s life. How did Peter the apostle and others exemplify this at Antioch?

The danger of such a state, where actions proceed out of a heart without personal conviction is that the person would be carried about by every wind of doctrine.

Apostle Peter manifested this kind of instability on the issue of Jews eating with the Gentiles in the early Church. Even other Jews with Peter; and Barnabas, who was Paul’s companion in preaching the liberty of believers in Christ, followed Peter’s hypocrisy. Paul rebuked them and pointed out to them the necessity of personal convictions in the faith (Galatians 2:11-18).

Paul, on the other hand, had a strong conviction. But despite this, he was prepared to abstain from eating meat for the sake of the weak believers (1 Corinthians 8:13; 9:19-23). His readiness to abstain from meat was borne out of sincere love and self-denial to aid the weak, rather than a knack to please men.

Question 4: Point out the danger of forcing our personal convictions on others in the Church.

By encouraging believers to be fully persuaded in their minds Paul was in effect warning the strong believers not to force their personal convictions upon the weak.

Believers who have personal convictions are stable, reliable and durable in God's kingdom. We can develop sound and strong scriptural convictions through an objective, prayerful, and painstaking study of the word of God. Though, this will require great discipline, diligence, and determination, it will be very rewarding in that one would be able to discover and know, firsthand, the things that are freely given to us of God.

Question 5: How may believers develop sound scriptural convictions?

However, the admonition for believers to develop personal convictions does not translate to everyone doing what seems right in their own eyes. There are basic rules in scripture to guide believers on moral issues; and in such matters there is no room for private opinions. Also, concerning foundational doctrinal issues like Repentance and faith in Christ, Restitution, Water baptism, Sanctification and other basic doctrines of the word of God, there should be no compromise. Even on some issues that are not particularly mentioned in the Bible, we are provided with scriptural guidelines to direct our course of action. For instance, issues like smoking, use of narcotics, gambling and pornography are not directly mentioned in Scripture, but we are not left in doubt that these acts are sinful. In such clear cases, believers are not left to their own private convictions but they should just accept the word of God as given and comply with what it says.

PURE CONSCIENCE WITH BROTHERLY LOVE AMONG CHRISTIANS (Romans 14:20-23; 1 Corinthians 8:10-12; Acts 24:16; Job 27:6)

In concluding this chapter on the responsibility of believers to the weak brethren in the Church, Paul the apostle appealed to the principle of maintaining a pure conscience before God. In the context of our text, the

reference to conscience is in regard to not having self-condemnation on account of what one does. A believer must not violate the conscience of a weak brother by encouraging him to do what he feels is wrong. Also, the weak believer must not indulge in things over which his conscience feels unsettled or doubtful. Job said: **“My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live”** (Job 27:6). We must be careful to avoid doing things that hurt our conscience.

Question 6: How can a believer maintain a pure conscience before God?

Paul said **“All things indeed are pure: but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence”** and **“Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin”** (Romans 14:20,22-23). Here, the apostle stated a principle that answers all questions about doubtful matters among believers. Our conscience, if it be properly enlightened, should be the judge in such matters on which the Bible is silent. If our conscience pricks us over any particular action we engage in, then it is wrong for us to do it no matter who else is doing it. Though someone else may argue and present us reasons why it is harmless doing it, our conscience should be our guide. Here then is the true meaning of the popular cliché: *“Others may, I cannot”*. In other words, a believer cannot just copy what others are doing without settling with God and the light of scripture in his own conscience. But then, we must be careful not to condemn those who feel no prick in their own conscience while doing what we feel compelled to refrain from. **“Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.”**

Summing up the exhortation in our text, the primary duty of strong believers to the weak brethren is love. Even though he is free and has knowledge of his rights and privileges in Christ, the truly strong believer is

the one who lovingly sacrifices his liberty in order to relate peaceably with his weak brethren. And in the real sense, the strength of a believer is not in exploiting his liberty, whatever the consequences; it is in sacrificing that liberty for the edification of others. In the words of Martin Luther: ‘A Christian man is a most free lord of all, subject to none; A Christian man is a most dutiful servant of all, subject to all’. So then, **“we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves”** (Romans 15:1).

DAILY BIBLE READING

| | MORNING | | EVENING | |
|------|----------------|-------|----------------|----|
| MON | 1 Cor. | 13-14 | Leviticus | 27 |
| TUE | “ | 15 | Numbers | 1 |
| WED | “ | 16 | “ | 2 |
| THUR | 2 Cor. | 1-2 | “ | 3 |
| FRI | “ | 3-4 | “ | 4 |
| SAT | “ | 5-6 | “ | 5 |
| SUN | “ | 7-8 | “ | 6 |

END OF NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

BEGINNING OF SPECIAL STUDIES

583 Lesson

RESTITUTION

MEMORY VERSE: “And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men” (Acts 24:16).

TEXT: Matthew 5:23,24; Luke 19:1-9

God’s Word reveals that all men, in nature and lifestyle, have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Acts of sin break the commandments of God as well as hurt fellow human beings. When the sinner responds to the gospel message by turning away from sin, God saves him. He is forgiven past sins and empowered by grace to live a new life of righteousness. He is however not set free by grace to continue to use stolen items, money and property that rightfully belong to others which he earlier misappropriated. Such a lifestyle is neither believable by people nor glorifying to God. The professing believer will also not have a conscience void of offence towards God and men. He, therefore, needs to remedy the situation by making restitution.

MEANING OF RESTITUTION (Genesis 20:1-8,14-18; Exodus 22:1-7; Leviticus 6:1-7; Numbers 5:6-8; Proverbs 6:30,31; Ezekiel 33:14-16; Luke 19:8,9; Acts 23:1-5; 24:16; James 4:17)

Question 1: What is restitution?

God requires that everyone who is saved from sin makes restitutions to people adversely affected by their past sinful lifestyle. Restitution is an act of making amends for offences committed against our fellowmen; restoring stolen or misappropriated things, properties or persons to their rightful owners; paying back just debts, giving back where one has defrauded, making confessions to

people offended and apologizing to those slandered so as to have a conscience void of offence toward God and men. This is done whether the person injured knew or not, for God knows (Hebrews 4:13).

We receive forgiveness when we confess and forsake our sins. Then, we are cleansed by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ (Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:9). When a man sins against God, other people often suffer as a result of his sinful acts. It is also true that when a man sins against his neighbor, he sins against God in the same act, having broken some of His commandments. God willingly forgives the sins committed against Him when there is repentance and forsaking of sin. But He requires that a man make amends to any person he has injured or wronged to show his sincerity and the genuineness of his repentance and willingness to lead a transparent life afterwards.

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| Question 2: Who is required to make restitution? |
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MANNER AND PRECEPT OF RESTITUTION (Genesis 20:1-8,14-18; Exodus 21:18,19,22,26-36; 22:1-15; 2 Samuel 12:1-6; 1 Kings 20:34; Nehemiah 5:6-13)

The practice of restitution in the Bible spans virtually all the dispensations of God's dealings with men. The revelation of God's will and word before the Mosaic laws demands that we make restitutions (Romans 1:19,20). Therefore, this doctrine which had been established many years before the law could not be abolished by the introduction of the law. Before the law, Abimelech took Sarah, Abraham's wife, but God rebuked him and said, "**Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife**". In spite of his explanation, God insisted: "**Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine**" (Genesis 20:1-8,14-18).

Question 3: In what circumstance is a professing believer required to make restitution relating to marriage?

In both Old and New Testaments, God's precept on marriage is, one man, one wife. Anyone who has added another wife or husband to his/her first husband/wife must do restitution to avoid God's displeasure and judgment.

Restitution is also part of the moral law. Repentance toward God for the children of Israel included restoration to man of all properties gained by fraud, lying or pretense (Exodus 21:18,19,22,26-36; 22:1-15; Leviticus 6:2-5; Numbers 5:6-8). This provision of the Mosaic law received from God ensured that all the Israelites lived in harmony and love. No one would be happy to discover that a fellow Israelite was living with his items or property he had misappropriated. Since the moral law is never abrogated, every believer needs to obey its provisions by restoring proceeds of fraud and deceit to the appropriate persons, places, bodies or authorities.

Rulers in Israel reflected and embraced this teaching on restitution (2 Samuel 12:1-6; 1 Kings 20:34). It is vital today for rulers - temporal and spiritual - to reflect on their commitment to this moral requirement for all people. What the believer's response to this teaching should be played out at the time of David when he fled his throne occasioned by Absalom's rebellion. A man of the family of Saul, Shimei, decided to curse David. When David was returning from exile, Shimei ran to make restitution to him saying, **“Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, neither do thou remember that which thy servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart. For thy servant doth know that I have sinned: therefore, behold, I am come the first this day of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king... Therefore the king said unto Shimei, Thou shalt not die. And the**

king swear unto him” (2 Samuel 16:5-8; 19:16-23).

The prophets in Israel also preached, explained and emphasized the need to make restitution by every backslidden Israelite who is returning to God. Nehemiah, for instance, rebuked the nobles involved in extortion among the Israelites for not fearing God. He was also firm in his demand that they make restitution (Nehemiah 5:6-13). Likewise all the prophets foretold of the coming of Christ, His atoning sacrifice as well as God’s requirement for restitution. The ministry of preachers today is akin to that of Bible prophets of old. And the onus is on us to teach this doctrine of the Bible to all children of God.

CHRIST’S REVELATION ON RESTITUTION (Matthew 5:23,24; Luke 17:3,4; 19:8-10)

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| <p>Question 4: Explain Christ’s Olivet teaching on restitution and its relevance to all believers.</p> |
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During His Sermon on the Mount, Christ revealed that restitution is to be done by all believers, including those who offer gifts or render service on the altar of God. **“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift”** (Matthew 5:23,24). The inference here is that God does not accept any gift or service rendered upon His altar by professing believers who have restitutions to make. He equally instructs believers who are offended to accept plea for forgiveness from those who apologize to them.

Since restitution is Christ’s doctrine, all Christians, irrespective of denominational affiliations, must practice it. Every believer must earnestly and whole-heartedly uphold and practice all that Christ taught in His word (Matthew 18:15-17; Luke 17:3,4; Luke 19:8-10).

Zacchaeus’ encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ presents another practical example of obedience to

this scriptural injunction. Zacchaeus wanted nothing to stand against his salvation - not even his wealth, especially the ill-gotten part of it. Though the people murmured that Jesus was gone to be a sinner's guest, He pronounced that salvation had come to Zacchaeus' house since he was ready to make right his life and wholly follow the Lord. Heart-felt repentance should naturally lead a person to return all possessions that rightfully belong to other people.

TEACHING AND PRACTICE OF RESTITUTION IN THE EARLY CHURCH (Matthew 28:19,20; John 14:26; Acts 2:42; 16:4,5; 23:1-5; Philemon 7-21)

The Apostles in the early church taught and practiced restitution. In fact, the whole church of God lived by it. The rules of righteous living are just as high (or even higher) under the dispensation of grace as those in the Old Testament. Restitution is as much a part of the gospel as conversion or water baptism. It is not a self-righteous act to merit pardon. When a man is saved, he will not only make right matters of money such as theft, dishonest gains and unpaid bills; he will also confess his lies, slanderous reports, unjust criticisms, hatred, malice - those things in which one may have injured others in word or deed. One may say, 'my brother or sister does not know that I talked evil of him.' But what about the person to whom you said it? You should go to the one to whom you spoke and confess it. It is better that we make right all previous wrongs here than face it in eternity (1 Timothy 5:24).

Having imbibed this truth, Paul the apostle was quick to make restitution to the high priest whom he reviled. Challenged that he was speaking roughly to the high priest, **"Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people"** (Acts 23:1-5). Onesimus was once a slave to a Christian, Philemon, whom he robbed and fled to Rome. After his conversion through Paul, he had to make restitution with the assistance of the apostle's epistle to his master.

Question 5: Explain how a believer should handle restitutions that involve other people.

Making restitution can be likened to a spiritual warfare in which we need God's help and wisdom to be able to overcome. Some restitutions are delicate because they may implicate or bring injuries or harm to other people who may not be saved. Some cases of restitutions involve settlement of issues with individuals or organizations that may adversely affect other people. Restitutions may also be delicate if they include cases in which we do not have clear leading from God's word as to what steps to take. In such cases, we need fervent prayer, wisdom and counseling from Spirit-filled ministers of God who believe and teach the whole counsel of God (Proverbs 11:14; 15:22; 24:6).

The civil laws in a country may not always govern in matters of restitution. For example, the law may provide a time limit for certain classes of debts and obligations, after which they may lapse; but no debts are outlawed with God. Time cannot cancel moral obligations.

Question 6: Mention Bible characters who made restitutions and the issues involved.

From the foregoing, it is clear across dispensations that Abimelech, Shimei, the nobles in Israel, Zacchaeus, Paul and Onesimus were among Bible characters that made restitutions. And every believer should be willing to obey this demand of God as it is for our benefit. Restitution is usually considered at the time of salvation because God will only forgive when a man is willing, so far as it lies within his power, to make right every wrong that he has committed against others. There would be need however throughout life as a Christian to be ready to make restitutions where necessary (Acts 23:1-5; Matthew 5:23,24).

BENEFITS AND PURPOSE OF RESTITUTION (Matthew 5:23,24; Acts 23:1-5; Philemon 7-21)

God's demand that restitutions be made has a far-reaching benefit in His plan. It will serve as an undeniable

testimony to people who otherwise might never seriously hear the story of the gospel. A religion that compels a man to pay his just debts, restore back the things he has stolen, and uncover his crimes demands confidence from men of the world.

Question 7: Explain the benefits of biblical restitution.

One, when restitutions are made, the peace of God floods the believer’s heart. Two, as guilt and condemnation are removed from the heart of the believer, there is confidence towards God in prayer and progress in his Christian life (Romans 8:1,2). Three, the practice of restitution makes a believer’s repentance genuine and his experience of salvation will manifest to others as fruit of God’s grace (Luke 3:8-14; Romans 8:1,2; Acts 24:16; 2 Corinthians 5:17). Four, obedience to God’s demand for restitution makes the power and possibility of grace desirable to sinners who will be challenged to yield to the Lord for a similar work of grace in their lives. Five, restitution cements our relationship with our fellowmen. Six, restitution establishes God’s principles of justice and righteousness among men. Seven, the obedient believer who restitutes his way pleases God. Eight, restitution makes the believer’s life and service acceptable before God. Nine, the believer who makes restitution is bold in preaching the gospel. Ten, he is sure of making heaven in the end.

DAILY BIBLE READING

| | MORNING | | EVENING | |
|------|----------------|-------|----------------|-------|
| MON | 2 Cor. | 9-10 | Numbers | 7 |
| TUE | “ | 11 | “ | 8-9 |
| WED | “ | 12-13 | “ | 10 |
| THUR | Gal. | 1-2 | “ | 11 |
| FRI | “ | 3-4 | “ | 12-13 |
| SAT | “ | 5-6 | “ | 14 |
| SUN | Eph. | 1-2 | “ | 15 |

584 Lesson

LOVE AND UNITY IN THE CHURCH

TEXT: John 13:34, 35; 1 John 4:7-12, 16-21; Psalm 133:1-3.

MEMORY VERSE: “Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3).

The Bible declares that God is love. He lived up to His name by giving His only begotten Son to die for man’s salvation from sin. And those who taste of this incomparable love through repentance and faith in Christ’s sacrificial death do not remain the same: they are regenerated, and by implication, called out of sin and the world to live a new life of righteousness by the grace of God. This spiritual transformation makes the erstwhile sinner who has a current experience of salvation a member of the body of Christ, referred to as the Church. The Church is a group of people called out of the world through the experience of salvation in Christ’s death and resurrection.

THE CORD AND POWER OF LOVE IN THE CHURCH

(John 13:34,35; 1 John 4:7-12, 16-21; Romans 13:8,10; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:10,11,15; 4:7; Galatians 5:22,23)

Question 1: How can the sinner have the love-nature of God in him?

Redeemed, believers have the love-nature of God in them. And the manifestations of practical love among the brethren will naturally result in unity. This is because as new creatures in Christ, they have the implanted spiritual capacity to demonstrate love. Without this spiritual experience, life will be barren, expression of love will be carnal and unity will be superficial. The reason is that love endears; it attracts others.

God’s love is the expected standard of the believer’s love for fellow brethren. His love is unconditional (1

John 4:8-16). It is sacrificial, eternal and enduring (Ephesians 3:19; John 3:16; Jeremiah 31:3; Hosea 14:4; John 13:1). Christ stirred up the hearts of believers to practically get into the life of loving one another selflessly, unconditionally and wholeheartedly. The kind of love our Lord enjoins is not a product of the old nature which manifests itself in suspicion, malice and envy, but a disposition which reveals itself in goodwill, confidence and mutual helpfulness. We are to love one another the way Christ loves us. He loves us with a constant, consistent and forbearing love. He sacrificed Himself in love. At the cross He displayed the meaning of true love; He is love in bold prints, plainly written upon the pages of history and readable by all men in all ages. As He loves us, so He expects us to love one another. He says, **“As I have loved you that ye also have love one to another”** (John 13:34).

The practical life of love among brethren gives rise to unity. Having endowed us with this spiritual capacity, we are to obey His command and **“love one another with a pure heart fervently”**. This requires that every believer and member of the church carry out his responsibilities of love towards other brethren who are sick, lonely, jobless, poor, etc. It is unfortunate that many avoid or refuse to carry out their responsibilities of love towards other brethren in the home and in local assemblies where they worship. Yet, they complain that there is no unity in the church. They have forgotten that love is interactive: as they expect others to love, so should they themselves! A church that understands true and scriptural definition of love and practices the same in the fear of God will experience biblical unity.

Love is essentially a manifestation of the multi-dimensional fruit of the Spirit. And where the believer loses his first love for God, his love for the brethren will also be flagging as it is difficult to love the brethren without a blossoming and fervent love for God. The case of Peter going to fish after Christ's death, and Christ's probing question on his love for Him illustrates this point. Peter, for instance, left feeding of the lambs and

sheep of God – his responsibility of love for God towards others - in search of the mundane. He could not keep the lambs and sheep of God together. But Christ restored him; and everyone who has abandoned his service of love that enhances the unity of the church needs to pray for restoration today.

Question 2: Why is love essential in the Church?

Love is vital amongst brethren in the church because it is the true proof of Christian discipleship. According to Christ, love is one of the virtues that convince the world that we belong to Him. Unbelievers understand little or no doctrine, creed or meetings of the church. The life of love, sacrificial giving, unconditional care and shared concern among brethren is all they care to see. **“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another”** (John 13:35). Love is the acid-test of a genuine salvation experience. The love that prevails in our Home Caring Fellowship has, often times, made observers proclaim, “These are Christians indeed, for they love one another.” Love makes for fruitful service for there is no obedience without love and no service without obedience. Thus, Christ warns: **“If ye love me, keep my commandments ... If a man love me, he will keep my words ... he that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings”** (John 14:15,22,23). The real test of love is obedience to Christ, submission to His will and a readiness to spend and be spent in His service.

THE SCOPE OF SCRIPTURAL UNITY (Psalm 33:1-3; Romans 12:16; 15:5,6; 1 Corinthians 1:10; Philippians 1:27; 2:2; 3:16; 1 Peter 3:8; Matthew 18:19; Luke 10:1,17)

The Bible did not leave us in dark concerning areas of scriptural unity. Since Christ’s death has removed all cause of separation, the divine imperative is for believers to be one. Therefore, those who maintain racial, tribal and ethnic divides in the church are not doing the will of God. They have, by their actions, rejected the purpose of Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross where **“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).

God expects believers to be one in fellowship, caring, worship, doctrine, worship, prayer, evangelism, etc. The church that is thus united is always a threat to the kingdom of darkness. The forces of darkness to which believers are constantly engaged in battle are, according to the scripture, organized in a united hierarchical order. And they work through their human agents on earth against the Church (Ephesians 6:10-17). Though Satan imitates the triune God, the diligence with which forces of darkness do evil throws a challenge to the believer who sees no reason in cooperating with God in fulfilling the great commission. Inspired by Satan, some sons of Belial bound themselves together with an oath not to taste anything until they have killed Paul. Co-operating to do evil and hinder God’s work and word is outside the will of God. Believers should out-perform these sadists through unity in carrying out divine imperative to save men from sin and eternal destruction.

We need to have the mind of Christ so as to be united in doing His will. The building of the Tower of Babel became an abandoned project because it was contrary to the plan of God for man. Many people still become spiritually bankrupt because they are united outside the will of God.

THE NATURE AND PRAYER FOR BELIEVERS’ ONENESS (Matthew 28:19; John 10:30; 17:21-23; Ephesians 2:14-18; 4:3,4,13; 1 Corinthians 10:17; 12:12-26; John 10:16)

Question 3: What is the standard of believers unity?

The unity in the Godhead remains the perfect picture of oneness that is expected of believers. Christ, on several occasions, referred to the Father as working through Him. Besides, He declares that He and the Father are one. He reveals in His prayer for sanctification and unity of the church that **“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also**

may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.”

The apostle Paul, in his epistles, used the members of the body to illustrate the kind of unity that God expects of believers. He says, **“we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another”** (1 Corinthians 10:17; 12:20,27; Ephesians 1:23; 4:25). The implication of this is that anyone who hurts a member is doing so to all the members of the body of Christ as evident in His revelation to Saul on the way to Damascus. As united, we share a common joy, pain, goal, aspirations, etc.

Question 4: Give reasons why unity is necessary in the church.

The believer needs to seek to obey God’s command to be united with other brethren. A song-writer highlights the common spiritual experience of all believers in his piece:

*“Elect from every nation,
Yet one o’er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation
One Lord, one faith, one birth
One holy name she blesses,
Partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses,
With every grace endued.”*

Since there is one God, one faith, one baptism, there is no room for disunity in the church and family of God. Any wonder then that Christ prayed for the unity of the church! He knows that the Church that enjoys unity in aim and spirit is animated by the same desire to promote the glory of Christ.

Unity is indispensable in the church of God today. The Bible says two are better than one: if one falls, the other will lift him up. In the battle against the Amalekites, Aaron and Hur supported and held Moses' hand up to ensure Joshua's victory, a picture of what co-operation and intercessory prayers offered on behalf of missionaries on the battlefield for the Lord can do in the church today. So, we need to be united to win victory in life's battles, advance and initiate positive changes for the good of the kingdom and edification of the body of Christ (Exodus 17:12; Judges 20:11; 1 Samuel 14:6,7; 2 Kings 6:1-3; Ezra 10:4; 1 Chronicles 12:38).

MAINTAINING LOVE AND UNITY IN THE CHURCH

(1 John 4:7-12, 16-21; Psalm 133:1-3; 1 Corinthians 1:13; Galatians 2:9; 1 Corinthians 1:10; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Ephesians 4:3; Philippians 1:27; 4:2; Colossians 2:2; 1 Peter 3:8; Nehemiah 4:1-23)

Question 5: How can you, as a believer, maintain love and unity in the church?

Unity is not an idle dream: individual members of the church have a part to play if the church is to remain united. **“Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”** (Ephesians 4:3). Apart from current and genuine experiences of salvation, sanctification and Holy Spirit baptism, the believer needs to pray for the rich experience and manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit if there is to be practical love and unity in the church. We need special grace to live the life that brings about love and unity by constantly triumphing over the sinful nature. Quarrels and disagreements can be settled among the brethren easily where all seek to live the selfless, Christ-like life. We must bear the inadequacies of one another as we seek to perfect the body of Christ. We must instruct in righteousness and rebuke/correct those who sow seeds of discord through gossip, jealousy, malice and other carnal behaviors in the church. It is important also for individual members of the church to practice restitution towards those that have been offended or hurt by their words or actions inadvertently. Leaders should be prompt in handling

genuine grievances and complains of neglect among the brethren like the early church (Acts 6:1-7).

Unity and love are so essential in the Church that no surrender of our own preferences can be too great to secure it. For nothing should we pray for more earnestly than Jesus' prayer that **"they all may be one."** We must all work at diffusing and permeating the church with a peaceful spirit by promoting and provoking love and unity which is the unvarying condition of all real success. The fulfillment of the function and force of the Church also requires unity. Therefore, each believing Christian must esteem the other better than himself. Unity calls for mutual esteem and affection. This can only be attained by a disposition that seeks to identify and place high premium on the good qualities in others.

Unity, like an exquisite fragrance, attracts people. Unity in the Church is a constant invitation, though voiceless, yet influential and effective. Through unity in the Church, many souls will be won and backsliders restored to the faith. It is as we are so united in love, fulfilling the divine purpose that God's blessings will be immeasurably showered upon us. The scripture testifies that where love and unity existed among brethren, **"there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore"**. Victory over adversaries and progress in the service of God, such as Nehemiah and the Israelites had while doing His work, will be a mirage without love and unity in the church. God's anointing flows and His presence abides unceasingly with believers who are united in Christ. **"Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you"** (2 Corinthians 13:11). Christ has prayed and died to make us one; we also need to pray and continue to make sacrifices of love to maintain unity in the body of Christ to the glory of God.

DAILY BIBLE READING

| MORNING | | | EVENING | |
|----------------|-----------|-----|----------------|-------|
| MON | Ephesians | 3-4 | Numbers | 16 |
| TUE | “ | 5 | “ | 17-18 |
| WED | “ | 6 | “ | 19-20 |
| THUR | Philip. | 1 | “ | 21 |
| FRI | “ | 2 | “ | 22 |
| SAT | “ | 3-4 | “ | 23 |
| SUN | Col. 1 | 1 | “ | 24-25 |

584 Lesson

THE URGENCY OF OUR TASK

MEMORY VERSE: “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: The night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4).

TEXT: Luke 13:1-5; Ezekiel 3:17-21; John 4:35-38

Often, we find very many things that are important but are not urgent. There are other things, which some people consider very urgent but may not be important. And there are things too that may be important for a while. There are only a few things that are both urgent and very important now and in the future even to eternity. The task of taking Jesus’ saving gospel to the sinful and drowning world is one of such things that are both urgent and important at all times. The consequences of the gospel if preached or if denied the sinner transcend this transient world into an endless eternity.

Question 1: Give some reasons why the preaching of the gospel is very urgent.

The important task of preaching the gospel is urgent for many reasons: Time is running out. The world will soon come to an end (1 Corinthians 7:29-31; 1 John 2:17). Our opportunity for service to the Lord will soon come to an end. Sinners will not always be ready and willing to hear or listen to the gospel message. So, while now they yearn for the truth, we dare not falter to give them the gospel (2 Timothy 4:1-5). There is too, the dreadful reality that the time of God’s mercy may pass when seekers may not find Him (Isaiah 55:6). It is therefore dangerous and of fatal consequences if we delay or fail to preach the gospel. Every lost opportunity leaves the heart more hardened and makes it more difficult to come into conformity with God’s will (Hebrews 3:12,13). Lost

days of grace amount to incalculable loss. Therefore, believers should strike while the iron is hot and sinners respond while the Spirit is calling.

BELIEVERS' DUTY AS WATCHMEN (Ezekiel 3:17-21; 2 Kings 9:17-20; Romans 10:13-15; Isaiah 62:6,7; Jeremiah 6:17; Revelation 3:14-22)

The work of a watchman is to warn others of impending dangers. The prophet is the watchman of God to warn careless evildoers of the dangers of sin (Jeremiah 6:17). Careless souls move about blindly till doom's day. Scorners may continue jesting till the day of death if no one warns them. Few realize they may be close to death. Many fail to recognize there is only a step between them and death (1 Samuel 20:3). As there are lots of careless people among those who do not know Christ, so there are careless and negligent people among those who profess to know Christ.

Question 2: What is the work of a watchman?

In the church of God, to aid and abet any sinful conduct is to deny both the overseer of the church the knowledge of his flock about which he must give account to God, and the backslider the opportunity to be availed good counsel and correction of his evil way.

Question 3: Highlight some opportunities sinners are offered to turn to God in the church.

Sinners inside and outside the church must be warned of the dangers of sin. Everyone should be given the opportunity of hearing of the saving gospel of Jesus Christ which is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). If they hear the gospel and by faith repent from sin and call on the name of the Lord as their personal Lord and Savior, they would be saved, else, they will be damned (Mark 16:15,16). But how **“shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?”** (Romans 10:14).

As our lesson today reveals, ours is a God of justice. He does not act indiscriminately. It is the soul that sins against Him that shall die (Ezekiel 18:4). God will not slay the righteous with the wicked (Genesis 18:23-33). When a man sins, the immediate fruit of his act is guilt. He bears the burden of that guilt. What he does with his guilt is very important. He may repent of his sins, call upon God for forgiveness and permit Jesus Christ to wipe away his guilt through His shed blood on the cross. If he does this he would be saved. But if he refuses to repent, he will continue to bear the burden of his sins. He risks eternal damnation if no one warns him of the evil of his way and shows him how to be free. This task of warning the careless and guiding him unto salvation is not optional for the believer. We are compelled to warn the sinner and the backslider to repent; else, we too risk our own place with God. Our souls are in danger of eternal loss except we warn the careless sinner in or out of the church.

DANGER OF LUKEWARMNESS (Revelation 3:14-19; Ezekiel 34:1-6; Isaiah 32:9; 47:8; Amos 6:1; Zephaniah 1:12; Matthew 22:5; 24:12)

The Laodicean church was indifferent about spiritual things; consequently, it was on the verge of getting its relationship with the Lord severed. The case of the Laodicean church is similar to the state of many believers today. Half-heartedness in the service of the Lord has never pleased God.

Question 4: What inevitable end faces the sinner in the church who refuses to repent?

All those who profess devotion to God but are by their lives and desire uncommitted to Him, are condemned in the Scripture. For example, Saul, the first king of Israel, obeyed God in the mission God sent him, but not wholeheartedly. He was judged and rejected (1 Samuel 15:13-19). Jehu avenged God upon the house of Ahab as God had stated, but he **“took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God...”** and consequently, **“in those days the Lord began to cut Israel short...”** (2

Kings 10:30-32). The people of Judah who the Lord had given a great victory in battle were not total in their devotion to Him. They held on to their idol worship and did not prepare **“their hearts unto the God of their fathers”** (2 Chronicles 20:31-33). So too was Amaziah (2 Chronicles 25:2). Needless to mention Judas Iscariot, who for his partial devotion to the Lord and for the reward of his iniquity, fell headlong, burst asunder in the midst, and his bowels gushed out (Acts 1:16-20)

To be indifferent to the cry of dying sinners is to break the already heavy heart of the Lord. He expects that having saved us, He will by us, save the world (John 17:20; 21:15-17). To be lukewarm, indifferent or nonchalant about the urgency of the task of the gospel is to heartlessly damn the world for which Jesus bled and died (Isaiah 53:1-5).

Question 5: What are the dangers posed by indifference to the urgency of our task?

Causes of lukewarmness include absorption in business (Luke 14:18), procrastination (Acts 24:25), insensitivity (Acts 28:27). But the Lord is calling us to repentance (Revelation 3:19).

Question 6: Beside the above-mentioned, what other things cause lukewarmness in the preaching of the gospel?

THE UNDYING VISION (John 4:35-38; Matthew 18:11; Mark 4:29)

“Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest” (John 4:35)

To the husbandman or farmer, the long days of toiling and sowing precious seed, contrast sharply with the happy and joyous time of harvest. For him, harvest time comes with great expectation. He looks forward to it with infectious enthusiasm and passion. The Lord in this text draws a correlation between the natural way of

sowing or planting seed with the spiritual sowing of the seed of the word of God. In either case harvest time is eagerly awaited.

With the right preparations, the seed sown is sure to germinate with the promise of fruitfulness and a good harvest. But unlike the natural seed which usually took about four months to bear mature fruits, Jesus, who a short while earlier had just sown the precious seed of the gospel into the hungry and ready heart of the Samaritan woman, was expecting immediate results. **“Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest...”** The Lord knew that the potent testimony of the Samaritan woman would begin to bear bountiful fruit immediately, not till four months.

But looking down, His disciples could not see the already ripe bountiful harvest from Samaria about to be gathered into the Kingdom. **“Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields,”** Jesus urged the disciples, **“for they are white already to harvest.”** The field of harvest is all around us today. The readiness of the dying world to be saved stresses the urgency of our task to reach the dying sinners around us with the saving gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. It also points at the fact that while we continually look down, too preoccupied with the mundane things of life, we fail to see sinners with wounded hearts, bruised by sins and heading towards destruction. Their desperate plea forbids us to linger. It must be now. They are ripe already for the harvest. We are to immediately put in the sickle, because the harvest is come (Mark 4:29).

THE REWARDS OF SOULWINNING (John 4:36-38; Psalm 126:5,6; Daniel 12:3; Proverbs 11:30; 1 Corinthians 9:19)

The labor of soul winning is not without reward. Jesus says in our text: **“And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal.”** This reward is partly in the present time and in the future also. As the harvester rejoices when his fruit are gathered into the storehouse, so the soul winner has present joy when

souls are won to the Lord. In fact, the more fruit the harvester gathers, the more his joy, so too the greater number of souls won to the Lord the greater the joy of doing the will of God; for **“Herein is my Father glorified,”** Jesus says, **“that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples”** (John 15:8). And this is the primary duty of the believer. Jesus emphasized this when He said, **“ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain...”** (John 15:16).

Question 7: What are your rewards as a soul winner?

But beyond the present, the reward of SOULWINNING is largely in the future, when the saints shall be gathered home to glory at the great and final harvest, for the fruit is gathered **“unto life eternal.”** **“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord”** (1 Corinthians 15:58).

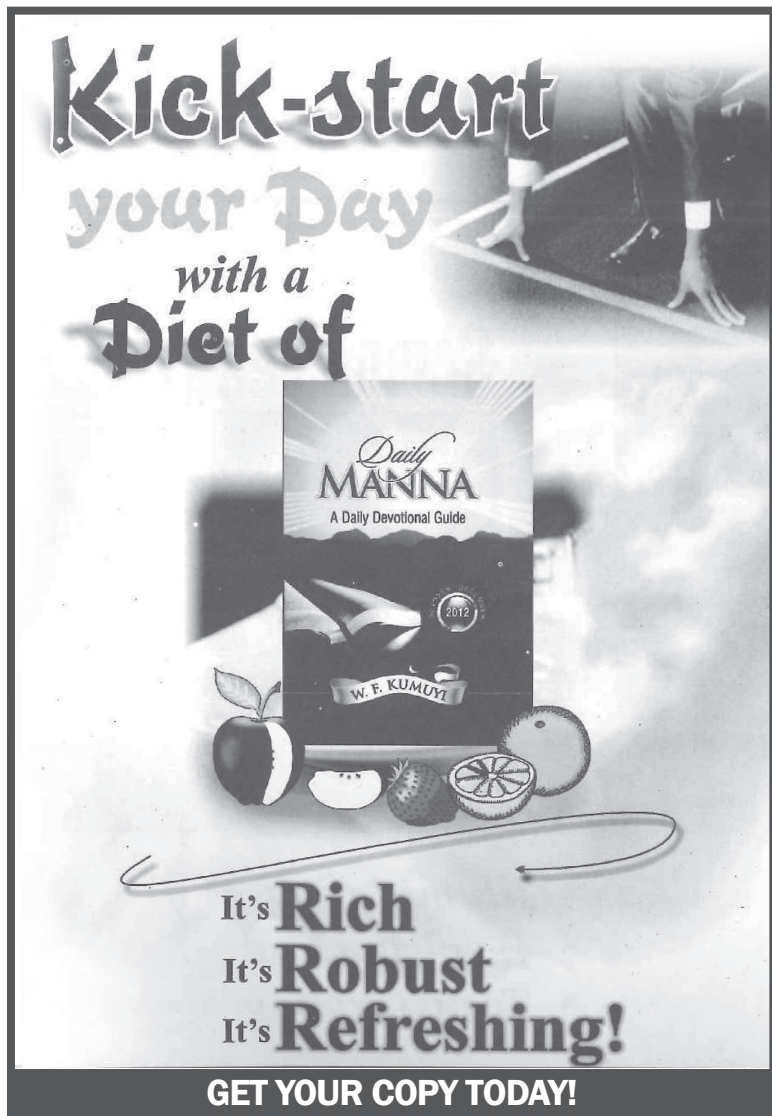
DAILY BIBLE READING

| MORNING | | | EVENING | |
|----------------|------------|-----|----------------|-------|
| MON | Colossians | 2 | Numbers | 26 |
| TUE | “ | 3-4 | “ | 27-28 |
| WED | 1 Thess. | 1-2 | “ | 29 |
| THUR | “ | 3-4 | “ | 30-31 |
| FRI | “ | 5 | “ | 32 |
| SAT | 2 Thess. | 1-2 | “ | 33-34 |
| SUN | “ | 3 | “ | 35-36 |

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

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| 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 |
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TUESDAY BIBLE STUDY

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

WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY

| | |
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| Brooklyn | 7:00 PM |
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THURSDAY (REVIVAL SERVICE) FAITH CLINIC

| | |
|-----------------|---------|
| Rockland County | 7:00 PM |
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FRIDAY (REVIVAL SERVICE) FAITH CLINIC

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

ALL NIGHT PRAYER VIGILS

| | |
|---|----------|
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| Brooklyn – Last Friday of Every Month | 11:00 PM |
| Queens – First Friday & Third Friday of Every Month | 11:00 PM |
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