

HOME BIBLE STUDY SERIES

Why

Be a Christian?

- 1 -- Introduction to Study**
- 2 -- The Past Forgiven**
- 3 -- Peace with God**
- 4 -- Given a High Purpose**
- 5 -- Given a Great Mission**
- 6 -- Given Strong Assurances**

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Lesson One

"Introduction to Study"

The Creation of man was the crowning of God's creation—He made "man" in his own image (Gen. 1:26-27). The creation of humans was designed so that they could share and enjoy many things in common, but at the same time have some differences that makes each "being" unique in this universe (Acts 17:26-28). The things that we share in common make it easier to identify with one another and give us the ability to help one another as well.

While man has some similarities to the animal world; yet, there are some distinct differences!

1. Animals act by instinct—reacting to outward conditions according to the desires which God placed within them.
2. But man has intellect, sensibility, emotion, and volition (a will or choice).
3. Man also has basic needs for his survival and well-being—such as: Physical needs, Emotional needs, Mental needs, Social needs, and Spiritual needs.
4. Man has the ability also to evaluate his needs and choose to fulfill them or not; and as well, to fulfill them either correctly or incorrectly.

When these needs are fulfilled correctly, man is acting righteously (according to God's Will). When they are incorrectly fulfilled, man is acting sinfully (going against God's Will).

All of us want to find happiness and we are in constant search for such. We believe that man's greatest happiness comes from fulfilling his needs correctly. The Bible is God's Divine Revelation to man to give us guidance in this decision-making-process (Jn. 10:10; 1 Tim. 4:8; 2 Pet. 1:3). Thus, optimum happiness and mental health should come from a full knowledge and obedience to God's Will. Forgiveness of our mistakes helps us to continue in the way of happiness.

Becoming a Christian, being saved, being justified or sanctified must be something we need—in other words—there are good reasons for such. The next five lessons will deal with very valid reasons for becoming a Christian. No one becomes a Christian without reason or reasons for such action. All we need to do is look into the Scriptures and continually see those reasons being placed before us to motivate or encourage us to become a Christian.

Acts 26:1-28 records Paul's sermon to King Agrippa. At the end Agrippa

understood the truthfulness of Paul's sermon and that he **needed** to become a Christian. He stated, "*You almost persuade me to become a Christian.*" (v. 28). Why didn't he become a Christian? He evidently had other **needs** that were being satisfied incorrectly that he was unwilling to give up. He knew there would be a price to pay to become a Christian. It is still the same today. All the good reasons can be presented unto people for becoming a Christian; but, they hesitate and even turn down God's offer because they know there is a price they must pay also—to give up those things that are incorrectly satisfying needs in their lives.

Please notice in the reading below that Paul was willing to give up any-thing in order to have the benefit of Christ in his life. Make a list of what he stated that he gave up:

Phil. 3:7-11 _____

There are times in our lives that some **needs** are more dominant that need to be filled. Notice that the church in Antioch saw a greater need at that moment over another need. They gave up temporarily the eating of food so they could fill another need—to fast and pray (Acts 13:2-3). Also, there may be times when we are forced to go hungry (not by choice). How well we deal with this indicates our maturity and faith in God.

Usually, we are better people when our needs are met correctly. Unfulfilled needs tend to put pressure on us to act or react, and generally leave a void (dissatisfaction, unhappiness, hurt, anger, loneliness, etc.) in our lives. How we deal with unmet needs can determine our happiness as well as reveal our maturity level.

Now to the Point!

If non-Christians have the same blessings as the Christian—then, what would be the point in becoming a Christian? Christianity must offer us some things that the world does not offer—or, it must offer to satisfy some major needs in our life that the world cannot offer. So, the expression: "**Why Be a Christian?**" is a valid question! It is a question that needs to be studied out thoroughly.

The Value of the Bible

God came down from heaven in human form to show and tell us why we should turn to Him (Jn. 1:1, 14). His words and teachings are recorded for us by his

chosen Apostles and Prophets (Eph. 3:3-5). They clearly indicate our need to turn to Him (Jn. 14:6). His teachings also give us good, solid, and valid reasons for turning to God! His teachings are able to furnish us unto every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17) and provide us with all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). It should be obvious that since He has created us—He knows us, and knows what we **need!**

Jer. 10:23 _____

Prov. 3:5 _____

His wisdom has provided every spiritual blessing that we will need in order to be acceptable to Him and have every true "**need**" that we have -- perfectly satisfied correctly!

Eph. 1:3 _____

Matt. 6:33 _____

Rom. 8:28 _____

Concluding Thoughts

God has promised not only to provide for the salvation of our soul, but He has promised to provide even the physical things that we need! What more can we expect of Him? He wants us to be spiritually healthy as well as mentally, socially, and physically. **Why become a Christian....??** The answer should become more and more obvious as we study together!

Questions for Discussion

1. What are the reasons why you believe that each person is somewhat different from all other human beings on earth?
2. What makes humans different from the animals?
3. What are some reasons for satisfying our basic needs correctly instead of incorrectly?
4. Why are humans happy when they have their needs fulfilled correctly?
5. Do the Scriptures give us reasons for becoming a Christian?
6. Why didn't King Agrippa become a Christian?
7. What was the Apostle Paul willing to give up to have the benefits of Christ in his life?
8. Do we every have to make a choice between different needs that we have—to give up one in order to receive the other?
9. Do non-Christians have the same blessings as Christians?
10. Will every need that we have be perfectly satisfied as a Christian?

Lesson Two

"The Past Forgiven"

Atheism in England has prepared signs to put in buses stating: *"There's Probably No God. Now Stop Worrying And Enjoy Your Life."* If people believed this and acted accordingly—there would be **good** reason to worry about what would happen to all of us! Without correct and godly morals and ethics, people could live any way they desired, kill anyone to get what they wanted, and act more like the animal world than the human world.

We come back to our question: *"Why be a Christian?"* or *"Why believe in God?"* If there is no God, then the only "reward" we can look forward to is what we can get out of this life.

1 Cor. 15:12-19 _____

But, if we believe that God exist; then, there has to be reward or punishment for the way we live our lives. If sin and disobedience to God had nothing to offer us, why would we want to sin? If there is no "reward" for living righteously and godly, what would be the point of living that way? Sin does offer its "rewards!"

Heb. 11:24-26 _____

God has created man as a "free moral agent" so that we can make our choice of either to believe in God or disbelieve—or choose to live a life righteousness or unrighteousness. But this choice is usually made on the basis of "what is in it for me!" Or, we want to know what is the "reward" for living one way or another. In this lesson we want to see the first basic reason for becoming a Christian—**All past sins are forgiven!**

Reward #1—Forgiveness

What is so desirable about forgiveness? What makes remission of sins a desirable "reward" for believing in and obeying the God of Heaven? If a person believes in God and believes the Bible to be the Word of God; then, the answer to this question can be easily answered!

1. Sin is disobedience to God (1 Jn. 3:4) or lawlessness. It is either doing what God says not to do, or failing to do what God says to do (Jas. 4:17).

2. Sin or Lawlessness requires a punishment! The "wages" of sin is death! (Rom. 6:23; Gal. 3:10). It is not only physical death eventually (separation of spirit from the body—Jas. 2:26), but it is spiritual death (separation from God—Isa. 59:1-2). Some sins bring physical consequences (1 Cor. 6:18) as well as eternal consequences (2 Thess. 1:7-9). If these sins are not forgiven, remitted, removed, cleansed away—we will suffer the eternal consequences of such (Matt. 25:41-43).

3. God has made this forgiveness possible through Jesus, the Christ! (2 Cor. 5:17-19). Man's problem is that he cannot remove these sins by himself alone; and, because of this, he will suffer the consequences—unless God is willing to forgive them. And that He is willing to do upon our meeting certain conditions. These conditions are shown in many passages—Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19, Rom. 10:8-10, etc.

So, if a person wants to escape the punishment of his sins, he must turn to God, listen to what He has done to make forgiveness possible, and then decide to do what He commands us to do. If we are willing and obedient; then, God will "reward" us with forgiveness!

An Illustration—Acts 2:1-41

Events in this chapter (Acts 2) took place about 50 days after the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus back to Heaven. He sent the Holy Spirit back to the Apostles to guide them into "all truth!" (Jn. 16:13). A large crowd of people assembled who were Jews from the nations of the known world. The Apostle Peter preached a strong sermon to these people—telling them that they had actually put to death the very one that had been sent by God to redeem them. His sermon was full of Scripture to prove his points and convicted many in the audience. They cried out... "***What must we do?***" They believed the message and realized that they had something to do so that God would forgive them. They were told to "***Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.***" (Acts 2:38). 3,000 gladly received the message and were baptized into Christ—forgiven—cleansed—and released from paying the penalty of their sins.

Continued Forgiveness needed

It is obvious that all have sinned against God (Rom. 3:23). No one can be called "righteous" (sinless) in this world (Rom. 3:10). Even many of the heavenly

beings (angels) sinned as well (Jude 6; 2 Pet. 2:4). Even after we become Christians (forgiven of all past sins), we still need the cleansing blood of Christ in our lives (1 Jn. 1:6-2:2). We must put off the old man of sin and put on the new man that is following Christ's example. We die to the old way of living that was wrong and begin to live the kind of life God wants us to live (Rom. 6:17-18; Eph. 4:20-24).

Clear Conscience

One of the values of having my sins forgiven is that my conscience can also be cleared of guilt. Even though I was guilty, I have been forgiven and therefore I can have a clear conscience in regards to the sins I have committed.

1 Pet. 3:18-21 _____

Heb. 10:14-22 _____

The Importance of Repentance!

One of the conditions of forgiveness is Repentance! John the baptizer, the forerunner of Christ, strongly preached Repentance (Mark 1:4-5; Matt. 3:5-10). Jesus and His disciples preached the same message. They urged the people to see their sinful condition, openly confess such , and turn to righteous living so they would be ready for the coming of the New Kingdom of Heaven. They were to show their repentance by turning away from their sinful activities and turn to doing the right things. This repentance that Jesus also requires under His New Covenant is stressed. (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 2 Pet. 3:9; Acts 17:30-31).

Concluding Thoughts

It is interesting to notice that those people who have heard the message about salvation through Christ and what they must do to be saved and they will not surrender to the Lord's Will—that their consciousness of sin is still in their hearts and they have no way to rid themselves of such. Many choose to harden their hearts and thus sear their conscience—but the problem is still there (1 Tim. 4:1-2). It is truly a great blessing to know that God has willingly forgiven my sins through the sacrifice of His Son upon my obedience to the Gospel of Christ (2 Thess. 1:8-9; 1 Pet. 1:22)). If there wasn't any forgiveness, there would be no reason to try to live right or worship God.

Questions for Discussion

1. Would disbelief of God solve our worry problem?
2. What reward does the disbeliever have?
3. Why does belief in God require a belief in reward and punishment?
4. What would be a good, logical reason for striving to do right if there was no reward in doing so?
5. How is sin defined?
6. Why must lawlessness be punished?
7. Upon what legal basic can God forgive sinners through Christ?
8. Why is forgiveness considered a blessing from God?
9. Why does the Christian continue to have need of forgiveness?
10. When can a person have a clear conscience?
11. Why is repentance so important in this matter of forgiveness?

Lesson Three

"Peace with God"

When nations are at war with one another, there is an absence of peace. When there is enmity, hatred, violence being expressed between individuals, they are at "odds" with one another or referred to as enemies (Rom. 12:20-21). When the hostility ceases between nations and individuals, they are considered as being at peace with each other. And what a welcome sight peace is to those who have been at battle with others. But the word "peace" can be used in other senses as well. It is used as a general greeting to others—*"Peace be with you."* (1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:3, etc.). It is wishing others "prosperity" or "soundness" or "well-being." When there is turmoil in the soul and it ends, there is peace within (1 Tim. 2:2). To hold one's peace is to be silent—not to speak (Matt. 20:31).

In this lesson, we want to look at the peace that God offers to man and the admonitions for Christians to be at peace with one another—no struggles against each other.

God is a "God of Peace"

Rom. 15:33 _____

2 Cor. 13:11 _____

God is at peace within Himself—so, He can rightfully be called the God of Peace! Jesus, the Messiah, was called the ***"Prince of Peace!"*** (Isa. 9:6). He was God's ambassador, sent to earth, as an envoy who wanted to make peace with man. When He was born, the heavenly host praised God saying: ***Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"*** (Lk. 2:14). Jesus came to offer to make peace possible between God and man. God's wrath against sinful men needs to be satisfied, and man's enmity against God needs to be removed. (Rom. 1:18; Eph. 2:13-16).

God, the Great "Peace-Maker!"

Man needed to be reconciled to God so there could be peace between us! We are not able to bring about this peace on our own or by our own power. Only God could accomplish such a desirable thing. His sending of Jesus made this peace possible.

2 Cor. 5:18-21 _____

Gal. 4:3-5 _____

Jesus, the "Peace-Offering"

Jesus is called the "Prince of Peace" since He is the only one who could end the enmity between God and man. Man is the one who broke the peace with his rebellion and disobedience to the Law of God. But when he rebelled, the sentence of death was upon him (Rom. 6:23). The worldly man is at constant war against God. He is more concerned about satisfying his own desires than doing that which pleases God. He wants to go his own way, not the way of God (Matt. 7:13-14). Thus, the problem that God had was—what can be done to win man back, to reconcile him back so there can be peace and fellowship with each other. And the answer was obvious—He had to win back man's affections. And what greater way than showing the greatest of unselfish love for His lost creatures (Jn. 3:16)! In this sense, Jesus is truly man's "peace offering." And it becomes obvious that peace is possible because we have humbly come back to God to find forgiveness.

Rom. 5:1 _____

But there is another basic factor involved in all of this. God needed to let mankind know of what He had done to make redemption and peace possible. So, He gave the Holy Spirit to the Apostles and Prophets to guide them into revealing the "Gospel of peace" (Rom. 10:15; Eph. 2:17). Then, upon our belief and obedience to this Gospel of peace, we find peace with our Maker!

Peace in the Family

Upon making our peace with God, we then have an obligation to live at peace with all of God's children.

Heb. 12:15 _____
Eph. 2:14-16 _____

1 Thess. 5:13 _____
Rom. 14:19 _____

Col. 3:15 _____

Hostility with God has ceased—we are at peace with God. But the same needs to happen with God's children. It was a great challenge to bring both Jew and Gentile together in one body. But it was done. This is a constant challenge as indicated by the following Scriptures.

1 Pet. 3:11 _____ **Matt.**

5:9 _____

We are actually called upon to be at peace with all men—to the extent of our ability to make it possible. But it is especially important that this peace be among the children of God! By this we prove to the world that we are children of the God of peace (Jn. 13:34-35).

Concluding Thoughts

If we desire to be at peace with God, it is necessary that we no longer be a friend of the world (Jas. 4:4). God must become pre-eminent in our lives. (Matt. 6:33). The "old man" must be crucified—put to death; and the "new man" needs to be obvious (Eph. 4:20-24). Only then can we have that peaceful fellowship with God that we need so desperately. Then, and only then, can we have access to all the blessings that God offers to those who seek Him and the peace that He offers.

Questions for Discussion

- 1. Who is generally considered an enemy?**
- 2. Why is God called the "God of Peace?"**
- 3. Why is Jesus referred to as the "Prince of Peace?"**
- 4. What did God have to do in order to make peace with His creatures?**
- 5. When does a person truly have peace with God?**

6. Why should God's children live at peace with one another?

7. What made peace-making so hard for Jew and Gentile?

8. Why does "friendship" with the world make it impossible to be at peace with God?

9. Why is forgiveness so important to peace?

10. Why is repentance so important to peace?

Lesson Four

"Given a High Purpose"

All of us know that we are alive and on earth, and evidently need to know why? If God created us and placed us on this earth, we need to know why He did such (Gen. 1:26-27). What does he want of us? What is the point of our existence? Those who do not believe in God and in his creative power that brought all things into existence, do have quite a struggle to know why they are here? But, to the Christian, we are not left to question or doubt as to our purpose for existence! God has made it clear in His Revelation to man. Man's purpose for existence is two-fold: **Glorify God in all we do, think, or say; and, give no offense to anyone seeking to please all men** (1 Cor. 10:31-33).

We are to Glorify God!

The Bible talks about the *"glory of God"* and calls upon all people to *"give glory to God!"* How does one glorify God—what is the process that is involved in doing this? The Scriptures tell us that:

- a) **The heavens declare the glory of God** (Ps. 19:1);
- b) **And that the whole earth is full of His glory** (Isa. 6:3).

So there is one thing for sure, we can recognize and ascribe glory to the God who created all of these things.

Lev. 10:1-3 _____

The sons of Aaron did not give recognition or ascribe glory to God and were burned alive. God said: ***"Before all Israel, I will be honored (glorified)."***

Ezek. 28:22-23 _____

The people of Sidon failed to give glory to God; so, God said He would be glorified in their midst when He brings judgment upon them!

Lk. 14:8-11 _____

The person who sought to sit in the "best place" at a wedding feast may be shamed if a person of higher importance replaces him. But if he seeks the "lowest place," but is asked to go up to the "best place"—he will then have glory from those who see this taking place.

God's greatness, majesty, and perfection should be given recognition by His creatures!

Rom. 1:19-23 _____

Man's failure to recognize God's glory brought shame and the judgment and wrath of God. Our failure today will bring the same thing!

Jere. 9:23-24 _____

Man should not glory (boast) in his wisdom, might, or riches; but he should glory (boast) in the God who makes these things possible!

One of the reasons Jesus came to earth as a human was to reflect to man the glory of the Father! (Jn. 1:14; Jn. 17:4).

How do we give Glory to God?

We must **first** recognize His glory! Then, we are to **express this in words**.

Lk. 23:46-47 _____

This Soldier recognized something great about this man in how He died! Mark's account says: *"truly this Man was the Son of God!"* (Lk. 15:39). What is your view of God? Speak it—tell it to others! Give glory to the Lord! The primary purpose of Worship is to give glory to God. We recognize it and express it in Songs, Prayers, the Lord's Supper, Giving, and the Study of His Word.

Ps. 50:23 _____

Matt. 9:6-8 _____

They recognized God's hand in this healing and expressed it in words to one another!

In the **second place**, we give glory to God by being obedient to His Will.

Jn. 15:8 _____

Matt. 5:16 _____

Jn. 17:4 _____

Jn. 21:19 _____

1 Cor. 6:20 _____

4:11 _____

1 Pet.

1 Pet. 4:16 _____

1 Cor. 10:31 _____

We recognize the glory of God and express this recognition in words as well as in action (being obedient to Him).

Concluding Thoughts

Can you think of a higher purpose for your existence than this? In all that you do or say, you do it to glorify your Creator.

The Lord Jesus gave glory to His Father on earth and after finishing His work of Redemption for mankind He entered into His glory (Lk. 24:46). Some day He is coming again in the glory of His Father (Matt. 16:27) to reward each person who has glorified the God of Heaven. And to those who patiently continue in doing good and seek for glory, honor, and immortality; such will be give eternal life—they will be given glory, honor and peace (Rom. 2:7-10).

For what are you seeking? What is your purpose for living?

Questions for Discussion

1. Do you have a purpose for living on this earth?
2. What are some things that give or show the glory of God?
3. Do we have a choice as to whether we should glorify God?
4. What two men were burned alive who failed to give glory to God?
5. Why will the humble be exalted?
6. When men fail to recognize and express glory to God, what will happen to them?
7. How do we show glory to God?
8. To what extent are we to glorify God?
9. To whom will God give honor and glory?
10. How well are you doing in glorifying God?

Lesson Five

"Given a Great Mission"

The Christian not only has a great purpose in life, but he has a great mission that has been given to the Apostles and handed down to us today.

That mission is to take the saving message of the Gospel to every creature on earth (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). This mission is in reality two-sided: (1) Go make disciples; (2) Continue to teach them to observe all that Jesus has given. This mission seems to have been carried out in the first century according to Scripture statements (Col. 1:23). However, this mission is an unending one because there are always others that come along that need to hear and respond to the message.

Who Will Fulfill this Mission?

Jesus has given this commission to those who are His disciples. The Church had its beginning in the city of Jerusalem. After a period of time, persecution caused most of these disciples to be scattered abroad (Acts 8:1-4). And it added... "***and they went everywhere preaching the word.***" I believe that the following things are needed in order for us to continue this great mission:

1. We must love God with our whole being (Matt. 22:37-38). Those who love God will keep His commandments (1 Jn. 5:3; Jn. 14:15). Love for God will cause us to reach out with the Gospel message.

2. We must love people (Matt. 22:39-40). Love causes us to be concerned for the welfare of people about us. We will want what is good for them. There is no greater need than to hear the saving message from God. Our failure to love our neighbor also invalidates our statement that we love God. (1 Jn. 4:20-21).

3. We must understand that people are lost without Christ (John 14:6). Jesus came to be mankind's Savior. Eternal life is found in Him. (1 Jn. 5:11). This good news needs to be preached to all mankind because all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). The Gospel is their only hope for salvation (Rom. 1:16).

4. We need to be trained in order to reach out to others (2 Tim. 2:2). We must know and understand the message ourselves. So much error is being taught that people are confused—not knowing exactly what to believe. Our knowledge must be greater (2 Pet. 3:18). Our outreach to others must be non-threatening and not self-righteous (Eph. 4:13-15; 2 Tim. 2:24-26). All of this takes time and patience. (Eph. 5:16; Heb. 6:1-3).

5. We must lift up Christ for people to be saved (John 12:32). The Apostle Paul said that he preached Christ crucified! (1 Cor. 2:2). It is this message of God's love for man that will draw people to God. People cannot be forced, coerced, or made to become followers of Christ; but, the telling of the greatest act of love on God's part can touch the hearts of good and honest people.

6. We must not to receive the Grace of God in vain (1 Cor. 15:10). The Apostle stated that God's grace caused him to labor more abundantly. Of all the billions of people on earth, we have been given the special privilege to hear and respond to the Gospel message. Don't others need to have that same privilege? God wants all to hear of His marvelous grace found in Christ Jesus! God's grace is our motivator to see that others do get a chance to hear God's message. How can we continue in the grace of God and do something about getting this message out to others?

Multi-faceted Mission

While we have emphasized the need to carry out the Great Commission so that all mankind can have an opportunity to hear the Gospel, yet there are other factors that could be called our mission also—such as: **Teaching, Benevolence, and Worship.** But the interesting factor about these three areas is that all three help to prepare us for the great mission of getting the Gospel into all the world.

- a) **The Teaching aspect** is to train or prepare us to individually take the message to others by our godly lives and our knowledge of the Gospel of Christ.
- b) **The Benevolence aspect** is to show our love and concern for people who are in need about us that often opens the door for the Gospel to be received by them.
- c) **The Worship aspect** is to help keep our determination strong to be a Christian and keep striving to bring others in this "Kingdom of Priests."

An Example to Encourage us

We have all heard of the "Tower of Babel!" (Gen. 10). After the great flood, mankind began to multiply on the earth again. They got their heads together and made some decisions.

- a) They would find a suitable land where they could all live together;
- b) They would build a great city that could be seen for miles;
- c) They would make a name, a reputation, for themselves;
- d) So they would not be scattered all over the earth.

They were interested in building to their own glory—not God's! They did

not want to obey God and be scattered over the earth (Gen. 9:1). So, God intervened in their plans. He confused their language, so they could not communicate. This automatically caused men to go in different directions. But there is another side of this story that needs to be seen. In this short story is revealed the secret of succeeding in life.

1. Cultivate Oneness of the People! They had a common language that made it easy to communicate. They found a place where they wanted to dwell (Gen. 11:2). They could accumulate great numbers—and great numbers can accomplish great things. God wants His people to have this oneness.

Rom. 12:16 _____

Phil. 2:2 _____

God knows the great value of oneness for His Church. If you want to destroy the Church's growth: (1) Cause misunderstandings among brethren; (2) Cause parties, dissensions, or divisions; (3) Cause confusion, so people will not know which way to go; (4) Be indifferent or unconcerned about one another. Unity, Oneness, Harmony will accomplish what cannot be done otherwise.

2. Cultivate a great Vision together! (Gen. 11:4). They not only created a great vision, but were united in it. Unfortunately, they had a wrong vision that was in rebellion against the Will of God. We need a great and correct vision of our mission and how to carry it out.

3. Cultivate a people willing to work! (Gen. 11:6). They encouraged one another to do the work. They were in the process when the Lord confused their language. God's people need to be hearers and doers of the Word (Jas. 1:22). He wants us to "*Maintain good works*" in our lives (Tit. 3:14). We reap what we sow—no sowing, no reaping. Visions are pipe-dreams until someone begins to work to accomplish the dream. We need to set our hands to the task to see that it happens!

Concluding Thoughts

The people of Shinar had a oneness among them, had envisioned great things, and had set their minds to the task. God said about them that nothing they propose to do will be withheld from them. The sky is the limit if we follow these three concepts. The Church does not need those who undermine its unity, its great vision, nor cause the people to stop working. What a blessing to be a part of a growing Church of the Lord that is carrying out its great mission.

Questions for Discussion

1. In what sense does the "Great Commission" that was given to the Apostles apply to us?

2. What will invalidate our statement that we love God?

3. Why are people lost?

4. Why do people need training to reach out to others with the Gospel?

5. What does it mean to "lift up Christ?"

6. In what sense can the incident connected with the "Tower of Babel" become an example for us to profit by?

7. Why is "unity" so important to the fulfillment of our mission?

8. To what extent should we use contributed money to do foreign mission work?

9. What are some ways you, as an individual, can help contribute to the fulfilling of the Great Commission?

Lesson Six

"Given Strong Assurances"

"Who said so?" When someone tells me something with an attitude of assurance, I immediately want to know who is the authority in this matter. If a person is an "eye-witness" or an "ear-witness," this certainly gives more authority than someone's "think-so!" The Christian has something at his "figure-tips" that can be an absolute authority or standard for all he says—if he will use it! It is the "Word of God!" When God says it—that settles the matter once and for all! If we do not accept the Bible as the absolute authority, then to what can you turn to be assured? Look at the following passages dealing with "authority:"

Matt. 7:29 _____

Matt. 21:23 _____

Mark 1:27 _____

1 Pet. 3:22 _____

Matt. 28:18-20 _____

The issue of Authority is fundamental in all matters! If we recognize and accept the Authority of Jesus, then what He says settles the matter! And He has revealed His message by inspiration to His Apostles and Prophets so that we may know the Truth that comes from Heaven (Jn. 8:32; Jn. 16:13). The Apostle Paul wrote a letter (called The Ephesian Letter) that clearly states that when we read his letter, we may understand what God had revealed to Him and the other Apostles and Prophets (Eph. 3:3-5).

Assurance for the Christian

How can we know about our relationship with God? How can we know we are saved and on our way to Heaven? There are two possible ways that we can "know" that we are saved: (1) God comes down or He sends an Angel to tell me directly that I am saved; or (2) We go to the Word of God and accept what the Lord says about my relationship with Deity. I don't know of but one person that might fit #1—the Apostle Paul. Jesus appeared to Him to let him know that He was truly the Messiah, and told him to go into the city and there he would be told what he must do. The Lord did not tell him he was saved, but upon doing what he was told to do, he could be saved (Acts 22:16). So, he may not even

qualify for the #1 means of knowing. So, there is only one way that we can "know" that we are saved—**BY FAITH!** There are at least four things that could be involved in our "knowing by faith" we are right with God:

1. Assurance from the statements of "eye-witnesses!" The writings of the Apostles and Prophets state this matter clearly. (1 Jn. 1:1-3). They gave us God's truth so that we may know what they were "eye-witnesses" of. Their testimony is true! We can base our faith upon their "eye-witness" accounts.

2. We can be assured by our changed attitudes, outlook, and actions.

a) We know that we know Him by our keeping God's commandments (1 Jn. 2:3-5).

b) If we practice righteousness, we know that we are born of Him (1 Jn. 2:29; 3:6-7, 10. 24).

c) If we love our brother, we know we are born of God (1 Jn. 4:7-8; 5:2-3).

d) These things let us know we have eternal life (1 Jn. 5:12-13).

3. We can be assured by the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The evidences for His Resurrection are our assurance of eternal life with God (Rom. 1:3-4). Many "eye-witnesses" are recorded to prove that Jesus was raised (1 Cor. 15:3-8). The empty tomb was one of the great witnesses to the promises of God.

4. We can be assured by the Holy Spirit which God has given to us. (Rom. 8:16-17). The early church had the miraculous powers given to them by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:34-11). These gifts not only bore testimony, but they also served as the early guide to the churches until the written Word of God could be completed (1 Cor. 13:9-10). There is another way of looking at this concept. The Holy Spirit has stated in the Word of God what a person must do to be saved. Our spirit can confirm that we have done what the Spirit teaches. Thus, again, we know "by faith" that we are children of God.

An Example of Assurance

The Apostle Paul was privileged to see the "risen Lord" on his way to Damascus where he planned to capture Christians and bind them and bring them back to Jerusalem for proper punishment. But the Lord has something else in mind for him. Saul (Paul) made a dramatic change in his life—from being the persecutor of Christians to being persecuted because he was a Christian. The rest of his life was spent in proclaiming that the "crucified" Jesus was truly the Son of God! In his last letter that he wrote by inspiration, he states his assurance of His relationship with the Lord (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

a) *"I have fought the good fight."*

b) *"I have finished the race."*

c) *"I have kept the faith."*

Paul's assurance was not based on "blind" faith, but rather a well-founded faith in the promises of God to those who do God's bidding.

Concluding Thoughts

Can we be as assured as the Apostle Paul? If not, then why do the Scriptures keep emphasizing that we may "know" that we are in a saved relationship with God?

There are grave dangers in doubting God's promises. James tells us that the doubter is like a *"wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind."* (Jas. 1:6).

There is also the danger of being deceived by false teachers. (2 Cor. 11:13; Eph. 5:6; Rom. 16:18; 1 Jn. 3:7).

But there is also a danger of self-deception. (1 Cor. 3:18; Jas. 1:22).

We evidently can "know" that we are right with God—but it is based on believing and doing what God says. We can know "by faith" that we are saved and have the hope of eternal life with God.

Questions for Discussion

- 1. What is the value of an eye-witness to an incident?**
- 2. What is the only source of Authority in matters of our relationship to God?**
- 3. Why do we accept the Bible as an absolute authority in spiritual matters?**
- 4. Do you know of anyone that the Lord has appeared to and said: *"You are saved?"***
- 5. Upon what did Saul (Paul) based his salvation?**

6. How do eye-witnesses help to give us assurance?

7. Is a "changed life" the only thing one needs to prove he is saved?

8. Why is the Resurrection of Jesus an assurance for us?

9. How does the Holy Spirit give us assurance of our salvation?

10. Upon what can we base our salvation?

