

Home Bible Study Series

***Things
Inseparably
Linked!***

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Lesson On

"Jesus and Truth"

The wise man advises us to: ***"Buy the truth, and do not sell it..."*** (Proverbs 23:23). It is disappointing to see so many preachers, as well as members of the Lord's church, starting to sell (compromise) the truth of the gospel. What was once believed, rejoiced in, and held to is no longer desirable. Why? What could cause God's people to give up God's Truth for a lie? Paul warns that such will happen: ***"and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables."*** (2 Timothy 4:4). What has changed their minds? What overwhelming evidence has been brought to their attention that has and is bringing about a change in their understanding of God's Word?

The Hebrew writer seems to be dealing with this very thing in his exhortations and warnings—using the example of the Israelites in the wilderness to illustrate his point (Hebrews 3:7-19). Israel had been delivered by the hand of God from Egyptian bondage without a sword being raised by the people. He had brought them through the wilderness (by miraculously giving them food and water) to Mount Sinai where He gave them the Great Law like no other nation possessed (Psalm 147:19-20). And He had promised them the land of Canaan as their new home of freedom. But that generation of people rebelled against God, disbelieved (doubted) Him, and were not allowed to enter the Promised Land. What was their great problem? Disbelief or they doubted God!

One of the challenging things that God's children have always had and still do have to deal with is **DOUBT!** James warned of the dangers of doubt with reference to prayer when he said, ***"But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind."*** (James 1:6-8)

The Galatian Christians had gladly received Paul and his message of truth at first. They were so grateful for his bringing the gospel message to them that they would have plucked out their own eyes and given them to Paul, if possible (Galatians 4:14-15). But some teachers had come in among them and caused doubt of the message that the apostle had taught them. That doubt was leading them to turn from the truth of the gospel (Galatians 3:1).

Adam and Eve struggled with the same challenge—whether to believe what God said or what the serpent said (Genesis 3:1-6). Satan won that

battle and their disbelief (doubting the message of God) led to their being driven from the beautiful, desirable, pleasant Garden of Eden! (Genesis 3:22-24)

In our religious world, we are faced with the same challenge of whether to believe what the Word of God says or to doubt it. When God's truth clearly states, **"He who believes and is baptized will be saved...."**(Mark 16:16), do we really believe this or doubt it? What about all of these religious people (seemingly sincere) who have not been baptized into Christ? Is God really saying that a person must believe and be baptized to be saved? Won't God be merciful and save sincere people, whether they are baptized (immersed) or not? Why would we doubt what God says—does God lie? Is He wishy-washy? Does He speak out of both sides of His mouth? Will the deceptive wiles of Satan persuade us to doubt the truthfulness of God's Word? Will we drink water from the well of Satan that leads to death, or drink water from the well of God that leads to eternal life? (John 4:13-15)

One of the ways that men have tried to solve this dilemma is to rationalize. They see so many religious people who have not "obeyed the gospel" to be saved, but who seem to be sincere and very devout towards God. They solve this problem by believing that a person can have Jesus in his life without being so concerned about Truth! In reality, they feel that Truth is not all that important. The results—they separate Jesus from Truth, and Truth from Jesus! But isn't their rationalization just another word for doubt or unbelief? The rest of this article will look at some passages that tie Jesus and Truth inseparably together and deal with the question, *"Can one have Jesus and not also accept (abide in) His Truth?"*

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'" (John 14:6). Jesus plainly stated that no one can come to the Father except through Him. But He says that He is **"the truth."** Therefore, a person can not come to the Father except through **"the truth"**—which is Jesus! Can a person really believe in, have Jesus in His life, and at the same time call Him a liar?

"Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'" (John 8:31-32). Jesus points out that people become His disciples if they abide in His Word! But what is His Word—It is truth! (John 17:1-3; 8:40). A person cannot be a disciple of Jesus (have Jesus in his life) unless he abides in His Word, which is Truth!

“Pilate therefore said to Him, ‘Are You a king then?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.” (Jn. 18:37). Jesus came to bear witness of the truth. Everyone who is of the truth, hears (listens to) Jesus. Therefore, those who are of the truth (who abide in, walk in, truth—2 John 4) have both Truth and Jesus! What about those who do not walk in or abide in truth, do they have Jesus? If so, it would seem to make a liar out of Jesus!

“Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine (teaching) of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.” (2 John 9). John is here saying that those who abide in the doctrine of Christ (the truth from God), that they have fellowship (a relationship) with both the Father and the Son. But what about those who want a relationship with Jesus, but do not feel it is important to abide in the doctrine of Christ (God’s truth)?

“And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12). These people were going to come to believe a lie rather than believe the truth and be condemned! Why? Because they did not **“Love the truth”** and preferred **“unrighteousness”** over truth (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). If one is to be saved, he must believe the truth. But it is also necessary for one to believe in Jesus as well. The two are inseparable for man’s salvation. Do we doubt it?

Man’s challenge has always been—do I believe God, His truth, His word, His teachings; or, do I doubt Him because men contradict Him? Do I want to believe God’s truth or Satan’s twisted “truths” (2 Peter 3:16), contradictory statements (Genesis 3:4), fables (1 Timothy 4:7), and his lies (1 Timothy 4:2; Romans 1:25). Do I want to believe God’s truth or the doctrines and commands of men (Matthew 15:7-9) or the deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons (1 Timothy 4:1). Do I want to believe God’s truth or have an evil heart of unbelief (doubt) that leads to destruction?

May I encourage each of us to **“not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord”** (2 Timothy 1:8); to be willing to stand in and for God’s truth—even in the face of sufferings (2 Timothy 1:8); and to **“hold fast the pattern of sound words”** (2 Timothy 1:13) which has come from God through His apostles and prophets.

May we say with David of old, "***I have chosen the way of truth***" (Psalm 119:30); may we also truly walk in God's truth (Psalm 86:11); and, may we allow truth to be our shield and buckler against the wiles of the devil (Psalm 91:4). May we truly buy the truth and sell it not! For this is the only way we can have Jesus in our lives!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- ___ 1. Buying and Selling of Truth is an important Biblical concept.
- ___ 2. The delivered Israelites' great problem was unbelief or doubt.
- ___ 3. The Galatian Christians would have "plucked out their own eyes for Paul.
- ___ 4. Unbelief or doubting of what God says is the same as calling Him a liar.
- ___ 5. Rationalization is the only logical way to deal with the issue of Truth and Error.
- ___ 6. A person cannot come to the Father except through Truth.
- ___ 7. We become Jesus' disciples only if we abide in His Word or Truth.
- ___ 8. Jesus said that everyone that is of the Truth hears His voice.
- ___ 9. A person can have a relationship with Jesus without abiding in His Word or Truth.
- ___ 10. People are lost because they do not love the Truth.

Lesson Two

"Jesus and Salvation"

What does it mean to be saved? The basic concepts of this term are: to make sound, heal, save, preserve, or to save from death. It is also connected with the ideas of deliverance, liberation, or victory. It is to be saved from something. One of the great values of Genesis 1-2 is that it gives us a background as to why man needs to be saved and from what. The following thoughts should help to illustrate this:

1. Sin entered into this world through one man's disobedience. (Rom. 5:12). This of course was Adam.
2. When man disobeys God, there is a consequence—that is death. (Rom. 5:18-19; 6:23). This includes both physical death and "spiritual" death. (Jas. 2:26; Eph. 2:1, 5). All men will die physically, but not all men have to die "spiritually."

The real issue here can be seen in a short question—*"Can man deliver himself from this penalty of sin?"* If so, the problem is solved—we have nothing to worry about. However, the solution is not that simple. The Bible indicates that man's deliverance from the penalty of sin cannot be accomplished by the sinner! If he could be delivered by his own hands, then the whole Bible is a "LIE" from beginning to the end! Why? Because the whole emphasis of Scripture is on man's need of a Redeemer that can deliver him from the just penalty of breaking God's Law (disobedience). Genesis 3:15 begins this emphasis and it is repeated over and over throughout the Old Testament—**"Someone is coming! He is the anointed One to Redeem mankind from the penalty of sin."** (See Gen. 22:18; Isa. 53, etc.). Notice the emphasis upon this concept in Isa. 53:

- V. 6—All have gone astray, each to his own way. Our iniquity has been laid on Him.
- V. 8—He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people.
- V. 10—He serves as a guilt offering for us.
- V. 11—He will justify many...He will bear their iniquity.
- V. 12—He will bear the sins of many.

The New Testament opens up with the emphasis that this Redeemer, Savior, has come to make deliverance possible for mankind! (1 Jn. 3:5; Jn. 1:29; Lk. 19:10; Jn. 3:16-17). Jesus was fore-ordained to be a Savior before the world was created (1 Pet. 1:20). His mission was to seek and

to save the Lost and offer unto them eternal life if they would obey Him (Heb. 5:8-9). In His death, Jesus paid the price for our deliverance; and, in His resurrection, He assures us of our own resurrection unto life everlasting. Before He ascended back to Heaven, He gave His marching orders to His Apostles—***Go into all the world and preach the gospel (the good news of Salvation) to every creature—Those who will believe this message and are baptized (immersed in water) will be saved; but those who will not believe will continue in their condemned condition.*** (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16). God offers salvation to all; but only those who believe in Jesus and submit to His Will can be saved! Without Jesus, there is no salvation!

1 Cor. 15:13-18-- _____

1 Cor. 15:22 _____

Jn. 6:68 _____

Jn. 14:6 _____

Gal. 4:4-5 _____

Salvation for man comes from God only through Christ! Salvation is exclusively possible only through Christ.

Acts 4:12 _____

Heb. 5:9 _____

Jesus and Salvation are inseparably linked together. You can't have the One without the other. While some may look upon this statement as hard or harsh; yet, it is the truth. There is no other to whom we can turn for the deliverance from sin and its penalty.

GOODNESS vs. SEVERITY

The Apostle Paul reminds us of God's Goodness and Severity. Notice the emphasis placed on these two concepts in the following:

Rom. 2:2—God's judgment is according to truth concerning those who continue in sin and rebellion to Him.

Rom. 2:4—We are encouraged not to despise God's goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering with mankind. His goodness should lead us to repentance.

Rom. 2:5—Our danger is to have a hard and impenitent heart that will bring the wrath and righteous judgment of God upon us.

Rom. 2:6—Remember that God's goodness has made eternal life possible for those who will seek for glory, honor, and immortality.

We are encouraged to give diligence to make our calling and election sure. (2 Pet. 1:10). The Prophet Isaiah cried out: **"Seek ye the Lord while He may be found...."** (Isa. 55:6-7).

God's Severity can help us to see our need of fearing God and keeping His commandments (Eccl. 12:13; Heb. 10:26-31). While God's Goodness can help assure us of His love, forgiveness, and promised rewards (2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Jn. 3:1-3; 2 Pet. 1:2-4).

Concluding Thoughts

God has given us ample proof of both His goodness and severity. The Old Testament is filled with such examples (1 Cor. 10:11). We should profit by this examples and God's actions. We should not doubt God's goodness—but neither should we doubt His severity. Salvation for man is inseparably tied to Jesus—we must put our faith and trust in Him or be lost forever.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- ___ 1. Biblical Salvation and Deliverance go hand in hand.
- ___ 2. Adam is the one who brought sin into the world, not Satan.
- ___ 3. A man can only deliver himself from the penalty of sin, not anyone else.
- ___ 4. Gen. 3:15 is the first indication in the Bible of man's need of a Redeemer.
- ___ 5. Jesus was fore-ordained to be the Savior of man before the world was created.
- ___ 6. Jesus was not man's Savior until He paid the price for our redemption.
- ___ 7. The Gospel Message is that the Savior has come and made our salvation possible.
- ___ 8. Salvation is only possible through Jesus Christ to those who will believe and obey Him.
- ___ 9. It is impossible to believe in the goodness of God without believing also in God's severity.
- ___ 10. We have sufficient proof of God's severity, but not of His goodness.

Lesson Three

"Jesus and Baptism"

It is an obvious fact that people who have some Bible knowledge know that the Bible teaches a person to be baptized in water. The use of water as a means of cleansing is an obvious fact. And, the use of water religiously as a means of cleansing is not an uncommon thing.

1. The High Priest, under the Law of Moses, was to bathe himself before putting on his special garments to serve in the Temple (Lev. 16:4, 23-24).
2. For some reason the Jews required a Gentile who wanted to become a Jew to go through a ceremonial cleansing (called baptism).
3. John, the baptizer, came calling the Jewish people to repentance, confession of sins, and baptism to get them ready for the coming of the Messiah (and His new Kingdom) (Mark 1:1-5).
4. Jesus, Himself, was baptized by John and afterwards taught the people to be baptized with John's baptism (His disciples did the baptizing) (John 3:26; 4:1-2).

So, it was no surprise to Jesus' disciples that He commanded baptism of those who wanted to become His followers (Matt. 28:18-20). Baptism is an act commanded by God under this New Covenant given through Jesus to all nations. Therefore, as one of the first reasons for a person being baptized, he or she should do so because it is commanded of God.

**Examples of People Obeying
the Command to be Baptized**

John's work was to prepare the way for the Messiah. Shortly afterwards Jesus began His public ministry. After about three and one-half years, Jesus gave Himself over to be crucified, buried, was raised from the dead. During a period of about 40 days He appeared to His disciples so they would have ample proof of His resurrection (Acts 1:3), but would also know what was expected of them after the Holy Spirit came on them. Before ascending, He gave the Apostles their marching orders:

Matt. 28:18-20 _____

Mark 16:15-16 _____

After Jesus ascended back to the Father, where he was crowned "King

of kings" and "Lord of lords" and "Head of the church," He sent the Holy Spirit to the Apostles to give them power and to be a guide for their preaching (Acts 1:8; John 16:13-16). As they went preaching by the revelation and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we can easily see that they did command people who believed, repented, and were willing to confess Him as the "**Christ, the Son of God,**" to be baptized (in water, understood). Following are the recorded examples in the book of Acts that show this:

Acts 2:38, 41 _____

Acts 8:12, 13 _____

Acts 8:35-39 _____

Acts 10:47-48 _____

Acts 16:15 _____

Acts 16:30-33 _____

Acts 18:8 _____

Acts 19:1-7 _____

Acts 22:16 _____

What is God Commanding in the use of the Term "Baptize?"

It is one thing to establish the fact that God is commanding us to do something, but possibly another thing to know **what** He is commanding! In this case, the question is made harder because the Greek word used **is not translated!** They have merely carried the Greek letters over into English letters and changed the ending to make it sound like an English word. Let me illustrate:

Greek Word-----**Βαπτίζω**

Now, see if you can transpose the above Greek words into English words _____. See how easy that was!

The Greeks had three different Greek words for sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. Notice below:

Ραντίζω (Rantizo)-----To sprinkle

Ξεω (Cheo)-----To Pour

Βαπτίζω (Baptiso)-----Immersion!

Look at the following two passages and see if the Scriptures do not indicate such:

Rom. 6:3-5 _____

Col. 2:12 _____

Obedience Shows My Faith in God's Promises!

What has God promised to those who will be baptized? Go through the following Scriptures and write down what God promises to those who will believe Him.

Mark 16:16 _____

1 Peter 3:21 _____

Acts 2:38 _____

John 3:5 _____

Gal. 3:26-27 _____

1 Cor. 12:13 _____

Rom. 6:4 _____

Rom. 6:17-18 _____

Rom. 6:17-18 _____

Acts 5:32 _____

If you will notice that baptism is not commanded of people who are already saved, but commanded of people who wanted to be saved!

Acts 2:36-38 _____

Acts 2:41 _____

Thus, baptism is in reality an act of Faith. It makes our faith in God complete. It perfects our faith (KJV).

James 2:20-23 _____

The real issue is—we either believe God or disbelieve Him! If we believe that He will save us upon our obedience in baptism, then we will do what He commands. If we disbelieve Him, we obviously will not be baptized. To believe is to obey; to disbelieve is to disobey. I show that I believe in God's promises by my obedience to His Will!

If you examine closely the examples of faith in Hebrews chapter eleven, you will see clearly that everyone mentioned showed their faith by their obedience to God. James clearly states that faith without works (obedience) is dead (worthless)!

James 2:20 _____

Concluding Thoughts

It should be obvious that Jesus and Baptism are inseparably tied to each other. There would be no point to baptism if it had not been commanded by Jesus. If you believe in Jesus, you will also believe in Baptism. If you refuse to be baptized as Jesus commanded, you are rejecting Him!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- ___ 1. The use of water in some sense has been required by God in both the Old and New Testaments.
- ___ 2. Jesus was obedient in baptism but with John's baptism.
- ___ 3. God commands people to be baptized with the Holy Spirit in order to become a true follower of Jesus.
- ___ 4. Baptism can be performed in sprinkling, pouring, or by immersion.
- ___ 5. The Greeks did not have different Greek words for sprinkling, pouring, or immersion.
- ___ 6. The word, BAPTIZE, is a translation of the Greek word.
- ___ 7. The New Testament does not really tell us how Baptism is to be performed.
- ___ 8. Jesus promises Salvation or Remission of Sins to those who will be baptized with proper teaching and understanding.
- ___ 9. Baptism has the power to save us when we obey God.
- ___ 10. Baptism is not as important as Faith.

Lesson Four

"Jesus and the Church"

About half-way into Jesus' public ministry He finally made a statement about building His church. Up until this point, His emphasis had been on the ***"kingdom of heaven is at hand."*** (Matt. 4:17). But in Matthew 16, He intertwines the two together as one! This was done at a most appropriate time. Up to this point Jesus had not been preached as the Messiah, the Son of God! The Apostles were already getting insights to this fact, however. Others were beginning to see the possibilities. When Jesus questioned the Apostles to see what others were saying about Him, He received a variety of answers: John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the Prophets. He then asked the Apostles who they thought Jesus was. Peter was the first to speak out: ***"You are the Christ (Messiah), the Son of the living God!"*** It was at this point that Jesus announced that He would build His church.

Valuable insights can be gained by analyzing this statement in reference to other passages.

"You are Peter"

Jesus had given Simon, son of Jonah, a new name—it was Cephas in the Aramaic and Peter in the Greek.

John 1:42

Jesus could see in Simon Peter a great character that would be developed over a period of time. He did live up to his name in later life. Shortly after this confession by Peter, he denied the Lord three times. But later, he became a strong leader and pillar in the early church.

Gal. 2:9

Tradition states that he died for his faith by being crucified upside down—not feeling worthy to be crucified like his Lord. Peter lived up to his name which means a rock or stone.

"Upon this Rock"

Some believe that Jesus was saying that He would build His church upon Peter. Jesus is obviously making a play on words when He says: ***"You are Peter (a rock), and upon this rock I will build my church."***

However, the Greek words for rock are showing a contrast, not an identity. In the Greek, it is Petros versus Petra, which are two different genders. If the church was to be built on Peter (Petros), then why switch terms? Jesus evidently had something else in mind upon which His church would be built. We can look to the Old Testament as a possible answer.

Isaiah 28:16 _____

Jesus identifies Himself as that stone or foundation.

Matt. 21:42-44 _____

Peter identifies Jesus as this stone also.

Acts 4:11 _____

Paul identifies Jesus as this stone and the only foundation to build upon.

Rom. 9:33 _____

1 Cor. 3:11 _____

From these passages, we can conclude that the rock (petra) that the church was built upon was Christ, Himself! This was the confession that Peter had just made: "**You are the Christ (Messiah).**" Without this truth, the church is worthless—in reality, **a farce!**

The church is not built upon weak, wavering men; nor upon the ideas, philosophies, or doctrines of men; but, upon the unwavering Christ, the Son of the Living God.

In a special sense the Apostles and Prophets played a role in laying this foundation.

Eph. 2:19-20 _____

Jesus is the foundation that was laid through human instrumentality. This foundation was laid not just by Peter but by all of the Apostles and Prophets. In that sense, they are spoken of as being the foundation upon which the church is built. Jesus is the corner-stone, the chief stone—the others are not that important. This building is erected upon a sure foundation. He is a tried stone, a proven stone, which can be depended upon for all time.

"I will Build My Church"

Men may build many institutions, religious or otherwise, but none will ever measure up to the one that He has built. And.....neither can the institutions of men take the place of His church. For men to try to do so is a reflection upon God, but also a vain thing.

Psalm 127:1 _____

Matt. 15:13 _____

Matt. 15:14 _____

Men labor in vain to try to duplicate Christ's church. He is that one and only true builder that can accomplish God's purposes. The works of men will be rooted up by God to show their helplessness.

When Jesus made this statement, it was future tense—***"I will build."*** John the Baptist did not build the church; nor did Jesus during His public ministry. The stone had not been tried as yet—Jesus had to be tested first so that he could be a sure foundation. After His death, burial, and resurrection His church was built. From Acts 5:11 onward, the church was spoken of as being in existence.

Jesus claimed the church as His own! It is His by right of ownership. The phrase "church of Christ" denotes that ownership.

Rom. 16:16 _____

Men build institutions and often give names that honor one or more persons. The church built by Jesus carries His Name that gives honor to Him. The Name of Jesus is indelibly stamped upon the church.

Acts 4:12 _____

Phil. 2:9 _____

Jesus did not state that He would build many different churches, but only one.

Eph. 4:4 _____

Eph. 2:16 _____

It should be the desire of everyone who has been saved by Jesus to be a part of His church that honors His Name. The Church or Kingdom are inseparably linked to Jesus! They cannot be separated!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1. How did Jesus indicate that the church and the kingdom were the same institution?**
- 2. What important event had just occurred when Jesus said He would build His church?**
- 3. What does the name "Peter" mean in the Greek?**
- 4. Was the church build upon Peter?**
- 5. What was the foundation that the church was built upon as revealed by the New Testament?**
- 6. What connection does Peter's confession have to Jesus being the foundation of the church?**
- 7. What role did the Apostles and Prophets play in laying this foundation?**
- 8. What is meant by the expression that Jesus is the "corner-stone?"**
- 9. What part did John the baptizer play in the building of the church?**
- 10. Why have men tried to mimic the church that Jesus built?**
- 11. What is the purpose of a name?**
- 12. By what name alone can man be saved?**
- 13. How many churches did Jesus build?**

Lesson Five

"Jesus and the Hope Of Heaven"

Human beings are creatures of motivation—"What's in it for me?" We have to see some value or purpose for doing things. Why should I want to live a righteous life? Why should I deny myself the indulgence in all the tempting activities of this world? The question of why continually comes up and demands some kind of an answer because we are creatures of motivation. Our children continually remind us of this fact by their wanting to know why, why, why?

The Bible talks about the "one hope" (not many) of the Gospel—that is, the hope of Heaven. There are various Bible terms that express this idea of the "one Hope"—"everlasting life" (Matthew 25:46), "many mansions" (John 14:1), "new Heaven and Earth" (2 Peter 3:13), etc. If you were to ask someone, "*Do you want to go to Heaven?*"—I think that a large % would definitely say "yes!" A survey was conducted among 500 persons that desired to be preachers. Here are four of the questions and their response:

| | | |
|-------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| 1) Is there life after death? | (No—8%) | (Yes—92%) |
| 2) Is there a Judgment Day? | (No—39%) | (Yes—61%) |
| 3) Is there a Hell? | (No—69%) | (Yes—31%) |
| 4) Is there a Heaven? | (No—41%) | (Yes—59%) |

While they seem to be confused on their Bible knowledge, it is hoped that they can become more knowledgeable before they begin to preach. Survey after survey shows a high % of people that do say "Yes!" Going to Heaven is one of the great motivating factors that God has placed before us to get us to live righteous.

We can be motivated by various things: money, desire for education, thrill or excitement, profit, fear, love, etc. We can also be motivated to do various things: to go to work, to go to school, to dress neat, to make plans and carry them out, to buy, to sell, etc. When you see a sloppy, lazy, spineless, dirty quitter—you see someone not motivated. Give him the right motivation and his life will be changed.

God uses many things to motivate us: fear of punishment, gratitude and thankfulness, sense of duty, rewards, blessings, etc. Possibly, our

greatest motivation is Heaven. Heaven is God's "carrot stick" to lure us unto Himself. It is God's answer to man's question: "What's in it for me?" "Why should I serve God?" "Why should I want to be a Christian?"

The Hope of Heaven

"...always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15). "Hope" is a strong underlying concept in our lives whether we recognize it or not. However, the word is used in different ways, so it is necessary to clarify what we are talking about when we discuss the hope that is in us.

1. People often say: "I hope you are okay" (wishful thinking).
2. Others may say: "I am hoping to inherit a lot of money" (A desire, but not something that is certain).
3. When we talk about our hope in Christ, we are referring to a hope that is built upon strong evidence (certainty).

Biblical hope or the "one hope" of the Christian is based on firm evidences to give us assurance of what is ahead for us. This evidence is in various forms:

1. Old Testament passages that show the dependability of God's promises (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11).
2. The assurance that God cannot lie (Heb. 6:18).
3. The assurance of a resurrection unto Judgment (John 5:28-29; Rom. 1:4).
4. The assurance of a resurrection unto eternal life with God (1 John 5:13).
5. Our hope is also based on our belief (obedience) or faithfulness (Rev. 2:10).

We are actually being exhorted to give a defense for our hope (1 Pet. 3:15)—that is, to give reasons for having this hope (Rom. 8:24).

We are Saved by This Hope!

Rom. 8:24 states that we are saved by hope! It gives us great motivation to continue faithful to the end. It is worth the price that must be paid to receive this hope at the end of life. However, it is important to note that we have not yet received what we hope for. Hope ends when we receive that for which we hope (Rom. 8:24-25). With a strong confidence in this hope, we can:

1. Live with confidence and face the future with courage;
2. We can meet life's trials and challenges triumphantly;
3. We can walk in the light daily (constantly) with assurance;

4. We cannot turn our back on God, but constantly submit to His will;
5. We can be assured of the continual cleansing by the blood of Jesus.

There has to be a reason for doing what we do. If we doubt our hope, there is a grave danger that we will fall away and lose our hope. It is important that we hold our confidence steadfast to the end (Heb. 3:12-14). The Hebrew writer also reminds us that the Israelites that came out of Egypt did not get to receive their hope because of their unbelief (doubt) or disobedience (Heb. 3:18-19).

We have "One Hope" not many!

One of the many grave problems with the teaching of "Pre-Millennialism" is that it advocates more than "one hope." We are promised eternal life with God if we are faithful to the end—**that is our "one hope."** All that Jesus went through or endured in His life was to make this hope a reality for us some day.

1. He was born as a human and developed as a man.
2. He enjoyed and endured all that humans experience.
3. His life was one of perfect obedience to His Father's will.
4. He died a horrible death for our forgiveness so we could have this hope.
5. He was buried and raised from the grave to give full assurance of our own resurrection unto everlasting life.
6. He ascended up on high in order to send the Holy Spirit back to us to teach us and guide us unto this everlasting life.
7. 1 Tim. 3:16

Thus, as the apostles went out to preach this inspired message to mankind, they did so not only with boldness, but certainty (Acts 4:17-20; 4:29-31). Jesus' resurrection from the dead is our assurance that death does not end it all for humans who believe in God. Thus, when death would visit a family in the 1st Century Church, they had hope that their loved one(s) (who was a faithful Christian) would spend eternity with God (1 Thess. 4:13-17).

Concluding Thoughts

We all have learned that life is not just a "bed of roses!" It has its trials, tribulations, and heartaches. What is it that keeps us living, working, and striving to live righteous lives? It has to be the hope of heaven that we hold on to desperately that gives meaning to all that we have to deal with in this life. This hope keeps us faithful to God! But so does the fear of facing God in judgment and being punished with everlasting death. We

believe that we will be given either everlasting life (to be with God for ever) or everlasting death (to be away from God for ever) (2 Thess. 1:7-9). The two terms that the Bible has used and have become the most used by our generation are "Heaven" or "Hell!" (Matt. 25:41, 46). We determine our own destiny by what we chose to believe and how we chose to live. Have we chosen wisely? We need to keep our hope strong! But....we can't get to Heaven without Jesus, the Christ of God! The two are inseparably tied together. "No Jesus, no heaven!" But diligent faith in Jesus can assure us of the Hope of Heaven!

Questions for Discussion

True or False

- ___ 1. We do not have to have reasons or evidence to believe in everlasting life.
- ___ 2. There is no way for us to know that God does not lie.

- ___ 3. Believing in everlasting life is a matter of choice—not forced upon anyone.
- ___ 4. People cannot give a reason for their beliefs because they are not interested sufficiently to know the basis of their beliefs.
- ___ 5. The Scriptures do not teach that "hope" saves us.

- ___ 6. Hope ends when we receive that for which we hope.

- ___ 7. The Christian's "hope" is to be given everlasting life with God.

- ___ 8. To have doubts about our hope in Christ is to show our "unbelief!"

- ___ 9. Pre-Millennialism teaches more than "one hope."

- ___ 10. Heaven and Hell are the two terms that are used by our generation to indicate where one's final destiny will be after death.

Lesson Six

"Jesus and Obedience"

Man is not only a created being, but a responsible being that has the power of choice. This choice is a question of whether we will be obedient to God or disobedient to God and go our own way. If that was all there was to this issue, there would be no problem for man. But the choices we make have consequences that we have to face—and some of them are not very pleasant, even in this life! But the Word of God says that there are also "eternal" consequences of our choices that should cause us to sit up and take notice! If we believe this, then we obviously will want to avoid any undesirable outcomes to us or to our loved ones.

THE STATED PURPOSES OF GOD'S LAW

The Apostle Paul stated that God is not the author of confusion, but peace, and that He expects His creatures to also be orderly people (act according to His Law)! (1 Cor. 14:33, 40). All men, from the beginning of time, have been under Law to God in one form or another. We know this because the Bible clearly states that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). If all have sinned, then there had to be a Law that they were responsible for—for where there is no law there is no transgression (Rom. 4:15). Why did God give us Law in the first place:

1. **To show man how he ought to live—strict adherence to God's Law (Deut. 4:2, etc.)**
2. **To show man what is right (Rom. 7:7).**
3. **To know the consequences of disobedience to God (Rom. 6:23).**
4. **To pronounce righteous those who keep God's Law (Rom. 2:13).**

According to the last point above (#4), the Law of God is designed to pronounce that a person who keeps God's Law is just before God by his keeping the Law (perfectly, understood).

TWO WAYS OF BEING JUSTIFIED

According to the Scriptures, there are two ways that man can be just in God's sight: (1) By perfect Law-keeping; or (2) By grace through faith. In this lesson we want to see what is involved in the first way of justification that is listed—**"Perfect Law keeping!"** Is it really possible for man to keep God's Law perfectly and not break one Law? Is it possible for a human being to obey God in every detail and never go against His Law?

"Theoretically," it may be possible, but from a reality standpoint, there has only been one perfect man—Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God who became flesh—being tempted in all points like us, but without sin (Heb. 4:15). To our knowledge, there has not been another perfect person. But....what if man could keep God's Law, what would be understood?

Rom. 2:13—He is just before God!

1 Pet. 2:21-24—He is sinless like Jesus!

Titus 3:5—He does not need the mercy of God!

Rom. 11:6—He has earned or merited his way to Heaven!

Rom. 4:4—Eternal Life is owed to him as a Debt!

Eph. 2:8-9—He can boast in his accomplishments!

Rom. 4:14—The necessity of faith is made void!

Gal. 2:21—The Death of Jesus on the Cross was in vain for that person!

It should be obvious that the perfect person has no need of God's mercy—he is perfect, without fault! He is not lost, so he does not need to be saved! Salvation and forgiveness is for sinners, not for perfect people!

THE INHERIT WEAKNESS OF LAW

Have you ever heard someone make this comment: *"That person is so good that God ought to save them!"* That may sound good, but it is contradictory! If a person is "good enough," he does not need to be saved—for he is not lost! To admit the need to be saved is to admit that I am sinful. On the one hand, it is to see a person's need for the grace of God; and then, turns around and thinks that the person is so good that he deserves heaven!

The writer(s) of both the Roman Letter and the Hebrew Letter mention the "weakness" or "fault" of the Law. (Rom. 8:3; Heb. 8:7-8). It is very simple—**It cannot save anyone, but only condemns the law-breaker!** The Law, which is perfect, has no place for man's weakness or sinfulness in regards to being just before God (Rom. 7:12). Isaiah stated man's condition clearly—our righteousness is like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). It must be clearly understood that man is either a perfect law-keeper or a sinner in need of God's grace! (Rom. 7:24-25). Our "goodness" is worthless, unless it is perfect "goodness!"

Since we are sinful people, we are under the sentence of eternal death for our law-breaking. We need deliverance from such a curse! We can strive to keep the Law of God as good as we can; but unfortunately, we cannot keep it perfectly and are therefore under the curse of death.

There is no deliverance in "Law-keeping!" Why? Because it requires perfection! But this does not mean we shouldn't be obedient to Christ, the Son of God!

JESUS ILLUSTRATES GRACE

Jesus told the story of two men who went into the Temple to pray. One man was a Pharisee (a strict sect of the Jewish Religion). The other man was a Publican (a tax collector) that was looked down upon by the Jewish people as a traitor to the Jewish people. The Pharisee did not go in humbly, but arrogantly thanking God that he was not like other men—especially like the tax collector. He also reminded God of all the "good" things he had done....as though God owed justification to him. However, the Publican would not even raise his eyes toward heaven and cried out for mercy to God. Jesus indicated that it was the Publican that went to his house justified rather than the Pharisee. Why? Luke 18:9, 14 indicates two thoughts:

- 1. Because there are those who trust in themselves that they are righteous.**
- 2. Because those who humble themselves will be exalted, but those who exalt themselves will be humbled.**

It is important to see that our "goodness" is worthless unless it is perfect goodness! Otherwise, we must depend upon the mercy of God to save us. This passage shows us clearly that "good," "sincere," "righteous people" can be lost. Why? Because they are depending upon their own goodness to get them to heaven, rather than the Grace of God. (See Matthew 7:21-23). Cain and Abel illustrate this concept way back in the very beginning of things. They both brought a sacrifice to God. Abel brought a blood sacrifice—recognizing his need of God's mercy. Cain felt that God should accept whatever he brought—showing his lack of faith, but also his arrogance. Cain's disobedience invalidated his relationship to God. Abel was accepted before God on the basis of his obedient faith. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is given to help us clearly see that we are saved by the Grace of God, but through an obedient faith on our part.

MAN'S WORKS OF FAITH

Salvation by Grace is "universally" offered to mankind through the preaching of the Gospel. However, not all will accept God's offer since He has placed some conditions that man must meet in order to receive the Grace of God. These conditions do not in any way earn or merit our justification—but the conditions must be met if one is to be justified by the Grace of God. When the Apostle Peter stood before the thousands of

Jews on the Day of Pentecost (recorded in Acts 2) and preached the Gospel for the first time. He was able to convince 3,000 that they were lost and needed the grace of God to cover their sins. They asked what they must do. They were told to **"Repent and be baptized.... for the remission of sins."** (v. 38). Their faith had to be put into action!

Obedience and Jesus go hand in hand to save us! One without the other cannot save. We need the Grace that Jesus offers. But we can only receive this Grace by being obedient to the Gospel (2 Thess. 1:7-9). The two are inseparably linked together!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1. What is so important about man being able to make choices?**
- 2. How do we know that man has always been under obligation to keep God's Law from the very beginning?**
- 3. What are some purposes of Law?**
- 4. What are the two ways to be justified before God?**
- 5. What is the true outcome of a person being under a Law-System?**
- 6. What could be understood....if man could keep God's Law perfectly?**
- 7. What is the inherent weakness of Law?**
- 8. What are some purposes of God's grace?**

