

HOME BIBLE STUDY SERIES

Growing Spiritually

- 1—Developing Biblical Convictions
- 2—Using and Responding to Conscience
- 3—Priorities that help Spiritual Growth
- 4— Hindrances to Spiritual Growth
- 5—A Life of Purity and Holiness
- 6—Living up to My Profession

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Lesson One

"Developing Biblical Convictions"

How committed are you to living a righteous, godly, and holy life? Just how convicted are you that Christianity is the only way to live? How would you identify a convicted and committed Christian? In Psalm 37:1-6, there are three admonitions that help to identify such a person:

1. **"Trust in the Lord, and do good;"**
2. **"Delight yourself also in the Lord;"**
3. **"Commit your way to the Lord."**

Hopefully, when we made our decision to become a Christian, it was a trust, a delight, a committing of ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, not all who profess to be a Christian really fit this definition. There are those who are:

1. **Lukewarm disciples** (Rev. 3:15-16).
2. **Materialistically-minded disciples** (1 Cor. 3:4; Rom. 8:5-6; Matt. 16:26).
3. **Disciples who are indifferent to the cross they are to bear** (Matt. 16:24).
4. **And those who want what Christ offers, but are unwilling to really commit themselves to Christ and His Cause.**

God is calling upon all who profess the name of Christ to:

1. **Fully give themselves in service to King Jesus;**
2. **Rise above the indifferent and unconcerned to a higher level of living for God;**
3. **Have a high sense of loyalty without reservations;**
4. **Give ourselves to Him and be led wherever He leads;**
5. **Even be willing to die for Him and His Cause.**

In the words of the inspired Apostle Paul—**"To present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God..."** (Rom. 12:1). To be this kind of disciple, we must have strong convictions and a strong commitment to those convictions!

The Meaning of Conviction

Some times it helps to see other words that seem to have the same meaning. We call them synonyms. The following words are used to help define the word "conviction."

1. To convince, certainty, confidence, assurance.
2. To believe, to trust, a system of beliefs, make up one's mind, commitment.
3. To confute, to persuade, to bring to conviction.

To have conviction is to be convince of the certainty of what you believe.

What causes a person who claims to be a disciple of Jesus to have a lack of strong convictions? The following thoughts are given as possible reasons:

1. **Lack of Courage.** The Parable of the Sower (the rocky ground) would help to illustrate this concept (Matt. 13:20-21).
2. **Lack of study of the Bible.** How can one be convinced, much less committed, if he does not know what God says or expects of him (Heb. 5:11-14).
3. **Lack of Gratitude.** Unappreciative of what God offers to do for Him as a disciple (Rom. 1:21; Col. 3:15).
4. **Pressures of the world.** The Parable of the Sower (the thorny ground) would help to illustrate this concept (Matt. 13:22).
5. **Lazy and Irresponsible.** Some people just do not have any "get up and go!" (2 Thess. 3:10-11).
6. **Pressures of Parents.** Parents don't want to lose their children to another religious group and oppose their efforts to change. Jesus knew this would happen. (Matt. 10:37; 19:29).

Why are strong convictions needed by the followers of Christ? See if the following things make sense to you!

1. **Without strong convictions we can be easily led astray.** We would be like little children in the hands of an adult who wants to mislead us. (Col. 2:6-8; Eph. 4:14).
2. **Without such we can fall into the trap of unbelief.** The Israelite people who came out of Egypt had a real struggle with trusting in God. As a result, they were not allowed to go into the Promised Land. (Heb. 3:12-15).
3. **Without such we cannot know how to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling."** Yes, we have been given responsibility by God to work out our salvation. (Phil. 2:12-13).
4. **Without strong convictions we could be lost.** Strong trust in God and His promises will help us to be faithful all the way to the end. (Heb. 3:14-15; Rev. 2:10).

To Whom or to What are we Committed?

It is one thing to be committed to someone or something, but we must be committed to the Lord—to follow Him and respect His Lordship (Acts 2:36). Jesus does not want just "lip service," but full obedience to His Will (Matt. 7:21-23). It is also a choice between convenience and commitment! It is faithful obedience in all circumstances of life—it is not obedience if convenient! (Phil. 3:7-10; Matt. 16:24-25).

The convictions and commitment of the early Christians serve as outstanding examples for us today. Both Jew and Gentile had to turn from their former religious beliefs and practices to this new religion of Jesus. Many had to leave behind friends and family to follow Christ. They also suffered loss of jobs, houses, and possessions. They suffered imprisonment and even cruel deaths (Acts 8:1-3). How could they endure all of this? The answer has to be—they had convictions and a commitment to follow Christ as their Savior and Redeemer!

Developing Biblical Convictions!

It is not enough to have convictions and commitment to someone or to some thing—we need to develop Biblical convictions! I can have strong beliefs that are wrong and be committed to them; but that is not what God wants—He wants our convictions and commitment to be based His Word—what He says!

In order to have this kind of convictions, we must do the following things:

1. **We must believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God.**
2. **We must learn how to study and understand it correctly.**
3. **We must base our beliefs on what it says....not what I would like for it to say.**
4. **I need to check my understanding with others who can be helpful in pointing out additional Scriptures that may clarify my beliefs.**
5. **I must apply myself to read and to study for MYSELF so that my faith will not be an inherited one, but one that comes from my own convictions!**
6. **Be willing and open to constantly examine myself to see if I am believing and doing the right things. (2 Cor. 13:5)**

Concluding Thoughts

Our growth spiritually deeply depends upon proper convictions and a commitment to live accordingly. But also our eternal life depends upon such as well. We need to let Jesus be our example, guide, teacher, and our inspiration. He was fully committed to do the Father's Will even to suffer death itself for mankind's redemption. (Jn. 4:34; Matt. 26:29).

Test Your Convictions

Yes No

- 1. Does one have to believe in Jesus to be saved?
- 2. Does one have to repent to be saved?
- 3. Does one have to be baptized (immersed in water) to be saved?
- 4. Does one have to be "in Christ" to be saved?
- 5. Are all churches right with God?
- 6. Does the Gospel need to be preached to the whole world for people to be saved?
- 7. God only has one way for people to come to Him.
- 8. It is the "spirit" of the worshipper, not the activities he engages in, that makes his worship acceptable to God.
- 9. My eternal salvation does depend upon my being faithful to God's will.
- 10. Hell is annihilation.

Lesson Two

"Using and Responding to Conscience"

One of man's most distinctive and impressive characteristics is his "Conscience!" He seems to automatically possess the ability to evaluate his own actions. Kant, the philosopher, observed: *"Nothing is more awe-inspiring than the starry heavens above and the moral Law within (man)."* Another distinctive characteristic of man is his power of choice! This is closely tied in with the conscience of man. Man has not only been given the power of choice, but the ability to discern between right and wrong. He is not a mechanistic robot programmed by his surroundings; but he can think, evaluate, and choose the right and reject the wrong. Both society and God holds man responsible for his choice. In this lesson, we want to look at what the Bible says about our conscience and the part it can play in our growing spiritually.

What is Conscience?

Our term "conscience" comes from the Greek words: **Sun** (with) and **Oida** (know). It carries with it the idea of "to know with," "to know with oneself." It is the process of distinguishing what we consider morally good or bad—commending the good and condemning the bad. Conscience is a gift from God that has been placed in each human being. The story of Adam and Eve's sin in the garden indicates this. They were told not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When they ate, they were knowledgeable of good and evil. They also suffered the consequences of their wrong choice.

As a child grows, it seems that his conscience also develops to the point where God holds him accountable for his actions. There is a need to make a clarification here! God's Law can be divided into two major concepts: Moral and Positive Laws. Man seems to be able to know and understand the moral concepts without a divine revelation. But the positive concepts have to be revealed to man. To illustrate:

1. Baptism is a positive command of God.
2. God had to reveal it for man to know it is required by God.
3. When man learns that this is required by God, then his conscience comes into play.
4. If he obeys, then his conscience is clear.
5. If he disobeys, then his conscience accuses him.
6. 1 Peter. 3:21—*"The like figure whereunto even baptism does save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ...."*

The condemnation of the Gentile world in Romans, ch. 1, shows the work of conscience in their lives. God held them accountable for their actions even though they did not have a revelation from God as the Jews did.

The Function of Conscience

The following quotes should help to indicate the function of Conscience:

"Conscience is a silent voice in man that judges his very being."

"With this faculty, man is able to recognize right from wrong."

"That which causes man to act upon the right and restrain himself from the wrong."

"To pass judgment upon one's acts and bring about atonement and restitution through producing guilt!"

"It is a built-in device for spot-checking right from wrong."

"God created man to be a moral being. Thus, He endowed him with the faculty to be moral."

"Without conscience, the human race would have bogged down in a hazardous course, and no kind of civilization would have been possible."

The Conscience:

1. **Produces a sense of ought!** It makes a decision on what is the right or wrong actions and then produces a sense of what one ought to do—the right. And it also produces a sense of restraining from doing wrong.
2. **Produces a sense of well-being or guilt!** If one does right—a sense of well-being. If one does wrong—a sense of guilt. It makes and passes judgment upon one's acts.
3. **Produces a sense of a need for punishment for wrong-doing.** When one has gone against his conscience, he naturally feels guilt, shame, disquiet, distress, remorse, etc. His conscience not only accuses him, but calls for punishment for his wrong doings. The accusations of an aggrieved conscience are often detected in one's facial expressions. And as well, the approval of one's conscience can be seen in his face. *"The wicked flee when no man pursues; but the righteous are bold as a lion."* (Prov. 28:1).
4. **Produces an instinctive anticipation of punishment after death!** It is obvious from the ancient writings of man. The very concept seems to be built into man's consciousness. This is the reason why the threat of punishment after death is so easily understood when preached. However, that does not mean that men want to accept such or experience such.
5. **Produces a social judgment upon others' actions as well.** The effect of society's judgment is often great, but it can be a help to encourage one to do right.

How to have a Good Conscience

Man is a being with a conscience. He is therefore a responsible being—responsible for the choices he makes. How he deals with his conscience becomes critical to his **physical, mental, social, and spiritual** well-being. As followers of Christ, we should all want to have consciences that are good and clear (Acts 23:1). The following can give us how this can be done.

1. **A good conscience is one that is obedient to God.** (1 Pet. 3:16, 21; Rom. 13:5). The prompting of the conscience is to obey God. When this is done, we have a good conscience.
2. **A good conscience is one that is void of offense.** (Acts 14:16; Rom. 9:1; 2 Cor. 4:2). We should not go against the prompting of conscience. It is to be true to our inner self and not deny our conscience out of weakness or special advantage. Our conscience can bear witness to our speaking the truth.
3. **A good conscience is a pure conscience.** (1 Tim. 3:9; 1 Pet. 2:19; Rom. 14:22-23). A pure conscience is not one mixed up or defiled by wrong doing. It is one willing to suffer wrong in order to remain pure. We are warned not to encourage or even force one to go against his conscience. A man is blessed if his conscience approves of what he does. But if a man has reservations about doing something, but does it anyway, he is defiling his conscience. We need to do only that which we believe to be right.

How to have a corrupted or defiled Conscience

1. **A defiled conscience comes from having a weak conscience.** (1 Cor. 8:7; Tit. 1:15). To go against or violate one's conscience will make it weak. People who were not fully convinced about eating meat offered to idols did not act out of conviction, but weakness. They went on and ate anyway—thus, defiling their conscience. A weak conscience functions poorly in controlling our impulses—we tend to give in too easily. We need to remove as many tempting situations as possible until our conscience is stronger. We must learn to forego immediate gratification of desires for those that are wholesome and enduring things. And we need to be considerate of the rights and wishes of others.
2. **A corrupted conscience can be a seared or hardened conscience.** (1 Tim. 4:1-2; Prov. 30:20; Eph. 4:17-19; Isa. 59:9-14; Jere. 6:15). A person who goes against his conscience for a period of time will bring about a hardened conscience. He refuses to be guided by his conscience. Such will become slaves to sin.

4. **A corrupted conscience becomes an evil conscience.** (Heb. 10:22). Such a conscience needs to be cleansed by the Grace of God.
5. **A conscience can become corrupted by an over-righteous or overly strict outlook.** (Eccl. 7:16) It is talking about going to extremes that do harm or hurt to ourselves, or the Lord's cause. Such people can make everyone miserable around them.

A Cleansed Conscience

1. **A cleansed conscience is one that has been purged of its wrongdoing.** (Heb. 9:14; Job 27:6). The consciousness of wrong doing has been forgiven, cleansed from our soul by the blood of Jesus. We no longer need to feel guilty, but thankful! Job was said to be a perfect and upright man in all his ways! He evidently lived up to his conscience and had a sense of a cleansed conscience.
2. **A cleansed conscience is one that has been forgiven.** (Acts 2:37-38). Their hearts were pricked and their sinfulness was made evident. They cried out, *"What shall we do?"* (to have our sins forgiven). Peter's answer was, *"Repent and be baptized."* Without remorse, or sorrow for sin and a decision to turn from sin, we cannot have a cleansed conscience. Without obedience to the Gospel, we cannot have a cleansed conscience. Without a cleansed conscience, we cannot have a good or pure conscience.

Concluding Thoughts

Living in peace with our conscience is not easy. Many times our conscience calls for a decision that is hard to make:

1. A decision that goes against what we would like to do;
2. Or one opposed to the advice of friends or family;
3. Or it may contradict the laws of the people in power;
4. Or it may go against the voices of the multitude.

But conscience will not relent. It will not withdraw or modify its demands. It has spoken, and that is it! We may fail to obey the right and give way to passion. Or, we may be overwhelmed by allurements. But we can know that we ought to obey—it is our duty!

What kind of conscience do we have? Can we live with our conscience? Or, does our conscience convict us, bother us, or condemn us? Could we say with the Apostle Paul, *"I have lived in all good conscience unto this day?"* We can all have a good conscience that has been cleansed, if we turn to Jesus for cleansing.

*Lesson Four****"Hindrances to Spiritual Growth"***

Spiritual development towards maturity is a long and sometimes painful process. As James pointed out, maturity (perfection) comes out of trials and tribulations faced correctly with faith in God (1:1-4). It should be obvious that if we do not correctly deal with the first three lessons in this series that we will not grow spiritually. But in addition there are many hindrances that will try to stop us, slow us down, or discourage us such as: **anxiety or worry, fear, tensions, resentments, jealousy, ego-centricity, wrong reactions, "herd complex," and a closed mind.** But we want to spend time on four basic hindrances to spiritual growth in this lesson. Two of these can be seen in the Parable of the Sower, and the other two will be quite obvious as we look at them.

Hindrances to Spiritual Growth

1. Persecution. (Matt. 13:20-21). God has warned us of the possibilities of persecution (2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 4:12-16). If a person is not committed and prepared for such, he will not remain faithful, nor develop spiritually. If you will notice that plants in good soil remain faithful. Plants in rocky soil did not remain faithful—why not? Jesus said that the plant had no depth of root and when the sun beat down upon it (persecution), it withered and died. We need depth in the Word of God (spiritual food) in order to survive persecution (Col. 2:6-7).

Persecution can come in different forms! It can come in the form of "Peer Pressure!" (Exo. 23:2). This is identified as the "herd complex"—I have to go with the group or the majority or I become a "loner."

Persecution can come in the form of too much exposure to evil (2 Cor. 6:14-18; 1 Cor. 15:33). Too much exposure can be detrimental unless one is spiritually strong. The greatest problem with youth is that they are usually not spiritually strong.

2. Wrong Priorities! (Matt. 13:22; Mk. 4:18-19; Lk. 8:14). The "thorny" soil represents this hindrance! Look at the things that men place before the Spiritual:

- a) Cares of this world;
- b) Deceitfulness of riches;
- c) Lusts of other things;
- d) Pleasures of this life.

It shows that their primary affections are on things on earth (Col. 3:1-3). His life is filled with worry and anxiety over things of this life (Matt. 6:25; Phil. 4:6-7).

There is another underlying problem here also (Matt. 16:24-25). A person can be too centered on himself and what he wants. This person is unwilling to deny himself and take up his cross and follow Jesus. His sincerity could be called into question because it is only the good and honest heart (good soil) that produces fruit unto eternal life!

3. Failure to deal with past Guilt! (1 Jn. 1:5-10). Unless guilt is properly dealt with, it will hinder one's growth spiritually. It lies like a cancer in a person's soul. But when we have done what God requires, our conscience should be clear and we need to accept God's forgiveness with gratitude and go on with our lives.

The basic problem with this person is that he is unwilling to die to the way of sin—he has not crucified the old man of sin (Rom. 6:1-2, 6). *"It is not the ship in the water, but the water in the ship that sinks it. So, it is not the Christian in the world, but the world in the Christian that constitutes the danger."* (2 Cor. 7:1). He needs to clean house of sin—to rid his life of guilt. The "old man" must be put off (former behavior) and the "new man" put on—which is in righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4:22-24). We need to decide on which way we want to live. Complacency here will doom our spiritual development.

There are various reasons why a person will not deal with his guilt of sin properly.

- a) Fear (2 Tim. 1:7; Rev. 21:8).
- b) Pride (Phil. 2:7-9). God has given us the great example of humility.

Man has two grave problems:

- ◇ He over-estimates himself, his works, his efforts, and does not give glory to God.
- ◇ He over-estimates God's part in thinking that God will do more than He says He will do—thus, under-estimating man's responsibility.

Man has responsibility, but even that does not earn or merit his salvation. Our lives need to revolve around God, not self.

- c) Shame (Ps. 51:1-3). Man tries to cover his sins up and not deal with them properly like David. His spiritual development went backwards until he dealt with his guilt correctly. We can't hide anything from God (Ps. 139:1-10). Then why not fully open up to him. Why not request: ***"Search me, cleanse me, and renew me."*** God's way is best! He wants us to draw nigh to him so He can bless us.

4. Stubbornness. (Matt. 13:13-16). Spiritual development requires turning to God and right living. But people who are too stubborn or close-minded cannot be turned to the right way. Stephen's death was brought on by these kind of people (Acts 7:51-53, 58). He called them stiff-necked and uncircumcised in

heart and ears. They thought themselves to be children of God, but even the Master Teacher (Jesus) could not turn some to God because of their stubbornness and close-mindedness. The sad thing is that the close-minded are closed to the very things they need.

Indifference is a part of stubbornness. (Rev. 3:14-22). The church at Laodicea liked the status quo—they would not listen to the Lord and kept Him on the outside of their hearts. Our hearts need to be tender and open to God and His Word (Matt. 18:3-4).

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1. We must be involved in those things that promote spiritual development;
2. We must deal correctly with problems that hinder that growth.

The spiritual person is:

1. One who has been convicted by the Holy Spirit through the teaching or preaching of the Gospel;
2. One who has made a decision, a commitment, to die to sin and the world and to live unto God and righteousness;
3. One who, day by day, is learning from the Spirit (Word of God) how to live and thus will more and more produce the fruit of the Spirit in his life;
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Space for Notes

Lesson Five

"A Life of Purity and Holiness"

We live in a world that does not have the same values as the Bible demands! Christians, therefore, have a choice to make: (1) Whether to change and conform to holy living; or (2) Whether to conform or attempt to fit into the ways of society around us. If we choose the latter:

- a) We will dress like they dress and not like "God says!
- b) We will talk like they talk and not like God says!
- c) We will indulge in all kinds of wrong activities and not the kind God says that He wants!
- d) We will then be identified with the world around us and they will not hate us! (Jn. 17:13-18). The world usually hates those who are different from them.

But, if we want to be pleasing to God and acceptable to Him, we must live as God directs—even when it goes contrary to the world (1 Jn. 2:15-17).

Purity and holy living are necessities—no excuses accepted! Holy living is a direct command of God! (1 Pet. 1:13-16). When God commands we need to obey! He rightfully expects us to attempt to make holiness a guide for our lives. He does not require what we cannot do. He makes allowances for our weaknesses, but not our rebellion! If holiness is a must, we need to know what it is so we can pursue it and not the world and be identified with them.

What is Holy Living?

The following are synonyms for "Holy"—holiness, hallowed, saints, sanctification. The basic idea of Holy is to be cleansed and set apart for service to God.

1. In the Old Testament:

- a) Clean and unclean animals were those set apart for use in worship to God. Only the clean things could be eaten by the people.
- b) The Temple was composed of the "Holy Place" and the "Most Holy Place." This signified that these two places were set-apart for holy use in worship to God.

2. In the New Testament:

- a) Rom. 6:19 _____
- b) Rom. 6:22 _____

3. The concept of "separation from the world" is stressed! (2 Cor. 6:17; 1 Thess. 4:3, 7). Holiness is a state into which we are called; and in which we are to live! That is the reason why He calls us "saints!" (1 Cor. 1:2). The Apostle calls upon God's people to put away the filthiness of this world and bring our holiness to maturity (2 Cor. 7:1). It is to bring our lives into conformity to the Will of God. Deity is perfect holiness; and we are striving for such! It is to be separated from all forms of sin and to be consecrated to God and His service. When we were called by the Gospel and responded in faith and obedience to that call, we were then sanctified (cleansed) and set-apart to serve God. "Sainthood" is a state into which we are called. It is also a walk in which we forsake sin and love righteousness. We can then be called:

- a) "*A holy priesthood*" (1 Pet. 2:5)
- b) "*A holy nation*" (1 Pet. 2:9)
- c) "*A holy temple*" (1 Cor. 3:17)

And.....we are to greet one another with a "*holy kiss*" (free of sinful desires) (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20).

What Holy Living is not!

1. It does not mean perfection. The reason is....we are sinful or fall short of being like God (Rom. 3:23). We all need continual cleansing by the blood of Christ (1 Jn. 1:7). We never get too old that we cannot be tempted to sin. The Apostle Paul struggled with sin. (Rom. 7:15-20). He buffeted his body as he fought sin in his life (1 Cor. 9:27). But our **GOAL** or challenge is to be perfectly holy (Matt. 5:48; 2 Cor. 13:11).

2. It does not give us the right to look down on sinners! We should realize that "*but for the grace of God, go I.*" Jesus was a friend of sinners. He cared enough to die for them. But He did not live, talk, or act like them if it was against the Will of God. There is no room for pride in the Christian's heart for his holy life! We can only take pride in God and what He has done for us. We do not look down on those who are caught up in Satan's trap and who have been blinded by his deceit to live an ungodly life. We need to care enough to take the saving Gospel to them.

3. It does not mean to totally separate from non-Christians! We are to be a light to the world, not withdraw from the world. We are in the world, but not of the world! 1 Cor. 5 shows that we do not withdraw ourselves totally from worldly unbelievers. We obviously do not participate in their sinful activity, but we are to withdraw ourselves from worldly believers who will not repent. Our job is to try to rescue people from Satan's hold—not ignore them.

There is a passage in 2 Corinthians that deals with this topic that would be good to look at a little closer.

Be Not Unequally Yoked!

To have no fellowship with worldly people would require us to go out of the world! But it does say that we are not to be "unequally yoked" with them in any kind of relationship that would pull us away from God. (2 Cor. 6:14-18). A yoke was used to control two animals so that they could be worked. Deut. 22:10 states that animals of different kind were not to be yoked together. This concept is used here in 2 Corinthians 6 in a metaphorical sense after the same concept. Two different kinds of people should not be "yoked" together. They are going in two different directions and cannot work together toward a common end. Close and binding contracts or associations were not to be formed with those so different. This could include Idolatry, Marriage, Close Friendship, or Business dealings. The marriage of a believer and an unbeliever does not necessarily lead to "paradise on earth," but more than likely to "misery" and the "divorce court," or "apostasy." Even friendships may need to be changed where it is unequal in nature.

What is the concern being expressed? Such situations can help to pull the Christian back into the world. It can cause misery, loss of peace, loss of holiness, or loss of what was once prized.

God, then, illustrates the principle with six things (2 Cor. 6:14b-16):

1. What does righteousness and lawlessness have in common? Here is a person who always wants to live and do the right things "yoked" to a person that will recognize no moral standard to hold to. How can these two persons have fellowship together—share things in common?

2. What communion has light with darkness? Light would represent truth or the correct way to walk. Darkness would represent error, wickedness, ungodliness—the wrong way to walk. What can two such persons share in common.

3. What concord has Christ with Belial? Christ is the perfect Son of God and Belial is the wicked one, a worthless person, a son of wickedness. What do they represent in common?

4. What part has he that believes with an infidel (unbeliever)? What do or can they share in common? One is guided by God and the other is guided by impulses and desires of the flesh.

5. What agreement has the temple of God with idols? Never is a man so blinded than when he can see no difference between the Living God and an idol. They have nothing in common to share. He reminds them that they are the temple of the living God—not a dumb idol.

Admonition in view of these things

In view of these things, a Christian should be able to see how foolish it would be to become involved so closely with someone so far from what a Christian is and is try to do.

The Challenge is therefore two-fold:

1. **Come out from among them and be separate.** He is quoting from Isa. 52:11 where the Jewish people were coming back from being captives in Babylon and were faced with not bringing back the evils of Babylon. Thus, for a Christian who has left the bondage of a sinful world, don't bring over with you any of these evils—avoid those entanglements with unbelievers that would cause you to go back into the world (Rom. 12:2).
2. **Touch not the unclean thing!** We cannot go out of the world, but we can put the world out of us. We do not adopt the world's principles and practices. We do not yield to their fashions or seek their ends. Leave behind the unclean or forbidden thing.

God's promise to them is that he will receive them and be a Father to us and we become sons and daughters of God. We prove our son-ship by:

1. **Breaking free from worldly things and people;**
2. **Separating from the unclean things of the world;**
3. **By perfecting holiness in the fear of God.**

Concluding Thoughts

God's Fatherhood and our son-ship are conditioned upon our living a life of holiness. We are not forgiven and adopted as sons and daughters of God in order to just **keep on in the way of sin!** A holy life demands that we turn from the way of sin to the way of righteousness! (Rom. 6:16-18).

Lesson Six

"Living up to my Profession"

There is a good example in the life of the Apostle Peter that helps to emphasize the need to live up to the profession that I have made. Peter had been with Jesus for about three years at least. During this time with Jesus and the other disciples, Peter was pretty bad about speaking too soon and putting his foot in his mouth on more than one occasion. But especially on the night of Jesus' betrayal, he made his biggest blunder! Jesus had said that one of them would betray Him. Peter spoke up firmly and said that others may deny you, but he would never do such (Matt. 26:33-35). A few hours later, he not only denied the Lord, but did it with an oath! (Matt. 26:69-75). But Peter learned his lesson and learned it well and became:

1. The one to preach the first Gospel sermon to the Jews on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14);
2. The one to preach the first Gospel sermon to the Gentiles in Acts 10-11;
3. Had the privilege to write two of the letters in the New Testament;
4. And served the Lord effectively until his death. (Tradition says he was crucified upside down, because he did not feel worthy to be crucified like his Lord).

Simon Peter's thoughts of himself were that he was living up to his profession, but at times he wavered! Jesus saw a great potential in the life of Peter if he would continue striving to live up to his profession. He saw him potentially that he would become strong like a rock (Jn. 1:42); and gave him the name to show his confidence in what Peter could become. Jesus had a way of bringing out the best in people, and He still does today!

The Scriptures are constantly challenging God's people to live the best life they can live. He has given us the instructions we need to become that kind of a person. (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We need to feed on the Word of God, meditate on it, so that it can accomplish its God-given purpose—**to make us complete (perfected) in Christ** (Col. 1:28).

We need to be Committed People!

When we profess belief in Jesus as being the Christ, the Son of God, we need to show it by our actions. Faith without works is dead, being alone (Jas. 2:17). We need to commit ourselves to living a godly life after Christ. Only through a committed life will we be able to live the kind of life Jesus is calling for us to live. Our challenge is to: ***"Commit your way to the Lord...."*** (Ps. 37:5). ***"I***

besech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." (Rom. 12:2). Have you noticed that when we really put our hearts into doing something, we usually do a good job and feel good about it? (Matt. 6:21).

Yes No

- ___ ___ 1. An insincere person is a committed person. (Jn. 4:24; Heb. 11:6).
- ___ ___ 2. An indifferent and an unconcerned person is a committed person. (Gal. 6:10).
- ___ ___ 3. Commitment to God requires a completely surrendered heart (Matt. 22:37)
- ___ ___ 4. A committed heart automatically means a committed life.
- ___ ___ 5. A committed person can serve both God and Mammon. (Matt. 6:24)
- ___ ___ 6. A committed person can be committed to parents, children, and to God also. (LK. 14:26).
- ___ ___ 7. We can be committed to ourselves as well as to God. (Matt. 16:24).
- ___ ___ 8. We can be committed to a false religion and to God as well. (2 Thess. 2:11-12).
- ___ ___ 9. A half-hearted person can still be a committed person. (Rev. 3:16).

What causes commitment to God?

Could you tell why the following things help us to be committed to God?

- 1. Faith in God _____
- 2. Open heart to God _____
- 3. Sense of debt and gratitude _____
- 4. Recognition of our true purpose for being here. _____
- 5. Spiritual Growth _____
- 6. Reading or hearing about others _____
- 7. Wanting to serve God pre-eminently _____

Examples of Commitment

Can you remember something that stands out about the persons listed below that shows that they were committed to God and striving to live up to their profession?

1. Christ (Jn. 4:34) _____

2. The Apostles _____

3. The early Christians _____

4. The Apostle Paul _____

How do the following things help me to live up to my Profession?

Rom. 12:1-2 _____

Prov. 3:13 _____

Phil. 3:14 _____

Col. 1:11 _____

Heb. 12:1 _____

1 Cor. 15:58 _____

1 Jn. 1:9 _____

Gal. 6:4-5 _____

Concluding Thoughts

For each of us to grow spiritually as God desires of us:

- 1. We must hold to Biblical convictions that come from a correct understanding of God's truth.**
- 2. We must listen to and respond to our conscience within.**
- 3. We must set priorities that help us to grow.**
- 4. We must overcome hindrances to our spiritual growth.**
- 5. We must strive to live a life of purity and holiness.**
- 6. We must work hard at living up to our profession of Christ.**

How well are we doing? Will I keep on trying to follow Christ all the way to the end?

