Adult

Missionary Baptist
Vacation Bible School Literature

WHAT GOD EXPECTS FROM ME

The Missionary Baptist
Vacation Bible School Literature Committee presents

"What God Expects From Me"

Vacation Bible School Lessons for Adults
Written by Bro. Dallas Wheat

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Editors:
Bro. Bobby Vanderpool and Bro. Dallas Wheet

Contributing Editors:
Elder Kenneth Davis, Elder Billy Moran, and Elder H.C. Vanderpool

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Treasurer
Bro. Mitch Glasscock
3841 Mt. Lebanon Church Road
Alvaton, KY 42122
502-782-0103

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LESSON ONE
PRAYER

LESSON TEXT
LUKE 18:1-14

1. And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;
2. Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:
3. And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.
4. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;
5. Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.
6. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.
7. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?
8. I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?
9. And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:
10. Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.
11. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.
12. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.
13. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.
14. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

INTRODUCTION

Prayer is a sincere address or petition to God in word or in thought. Our lesson text sets forth a number of conditions of acceptable prayer, and it clearly indicates some conditions which are unacceptable. As presented in the Bible, prayer is a form of worship which includes all attitudes of the human spirit involved in an effort to commune with God.

The first mention of prayer is found in Genesis 4:24, in the statement, "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord." The Old Testament records at least eighty-five original prayers, along with seventy-four Psalms which can be classified as prayers. In all cases, we find that man prays because God has touched his spirit. Without divine intervention, man would not pray. Read John 3:19-21 and Romans 2:4.

EXAMPLES OF SINNERS' PRAYERS

Some people contend and teach that God will not answer the prayer of a sinner. This is not a true statement. Those who have been saved by the grace of God can give assurance that God heard and answered their prayer. In our lesson text, Luke 18:13,14, in Psalms 116:1-8, and in Acts 9:1-6 we find accounts given of God hearing and answering the prayers of sinners. There are a number of common characteristics in these Scriptures. First, each prayer was offered with an

attitude of self-humiliation. Christ, in His teachings concerning prayer, insisted upon humility and penitence. Second, these prayers were offered by individuals of a broken and contrite spirit. Compare the teachings of Psalms 34:18, Psalms 51:17, and Isaiah 57:15. It should be noted here that the attitude of the Pharisee set forth in the text was an attitude of self-exaltation. This attitude in prayer always hides God's face.

Often we hear statements prefaced by the phrase, "If you know the worth of prayer." The only individuals who truly know the worth of prayer are those who have been saved by God's Grace. Paul came to know the worth of prayer on the Damascus Road, and from the moment of his conversion, Paul became a man of prayer. Acts 9:11 states "Behold he is praying." In Romans 10:13 we find, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Paul certainly practiced what he preached concerning prayer.

METHOD OF PRAYER

"And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." Matthew 11:6. Have you noticed a growing tendency of people to offer "generic prayers," intentionally omitting the name of Christ? The mention of Christ is offensive to many people. For a certainty, the only way to access God is through Christ Jesus. A prayer offered unto the Father denying the Mediator, Christ Jesus, is worthless and like the chaff of wheat which the wind drives away. Read John 14:13, 15:16, and 16:23.

Our access to God is by faith in Christ. Ephesians 3:12. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace," Hebrews 4:16, and "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering," James 1:6, are both teaching that we must pray in faith. "But without faith it is impossible to please him." Hebrews 11:6.

In James 5:16 we find, for a prayer to be effective it must be fervent. That is to say, the prayer must be offered with a burning zeal from the heart. Also, for a prayer to be effective, it must be offered in the will of the Father. "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it on your lusts." James 4:3.

FREQUENCY OF PRAYER

"Pray without ceasing." I Thessalonians 5:17. "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." Acts 1:14. Both of these Scriptures teach that we are to embrace an attitude of prayer at all times. To do this the Christian must live a sanctified and righteous life before God. There is a tendency to forget to pray until problems arise in life. However, some of the most rewarding moments in life are experienced when immediate access to God is available. What a blessing the Christian receives when able to whisper, "Thank you, God," or "Please help me through this trial," and have confirmation that the petition is heard.

Believers should be both persistent and consistent in their prayer life. Verse one of the lesson text states, "that men ought always to pray and not to faint." Because answers to a prayer are not immediate, we tend to become faint and lose heart. This is the time when we should be strong in our resolve to pray. This is the characteristic set forth in verses four and five of the lesson text. The widow was persistent in her appeal. Along with the teaching that an attitude of prayer should prevail in the life of a Believer, the Scriptures also teach that the Believer is to be consistent in prayer. Daniel, we are told, "kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and gave thanks before God, as he did aforetime." Daniel 6:10. A regular schedule for prayer, like a regular schedule for Bible study, is essential to the spiritual growth of a Christian.

Prayers often are not elaborate and long, but are simple and direct coming from the heart. As a matter of fact, the Bible teaches against prayers involving vain repetition and lengthy prayers for a pretense. Read Matthew 6:7 and Matthew 23:14.

CONCLUSION

Prayer takes on many forms, but effective prayer is a conscious appeal to God, a conscious effort to commune with the Almighty Father. Prayer is a very personal element in the life of an individual. We must pray our own prayers! Some religious leaders instruct the unsaved to repeat a model prayer to secure salvation. This is not within the realm of possibility and is one of the damnable heresies spoken of in 2 Peter 2:1,2. Romans 10:13 states, "For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." This calling upon the Lord must be a prayer rooted in the heart of the person experiencing the need and can not be a prayer prompted or motivated by someone else.

The "Real" Lord's Prayer is recorded in John 17. From verse 6 through the remainder of the chapter, the prayer is intercessory. We, as a church and as children of God, should constantly show forth the same love and concern for others, especially for lost humanity, as did Christ in this prayer. Read Matthew 5:13-16. Speaking to Israel, Samuel stated, "Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and right way." 1 Samuel 12:23. Indeed, the Scriptures teach that we are to pray for each other.

We find Scriptural references of people praying while standing, while kneeling, while lying, etc. The posture of the body is not the governing factor in our approach to God. An acceptable prayer to God must be in faith, in sincerity and offered in the name of Christ.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

I Timothy 2:1-8, I Kings3:3-11, 18:30-39,
I Samuel 1:9-24, Acts 26:13-18, I Samuel 12:23,
II Chronicles 7:14, Matthew 6:5-15

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Left to his own devices, would a person ever seek God?
2. Discuss Proverbs 1:25-28 relative to prayer.
3. List some attributes of effective prayer.
4. Discuss Romans 8:26 and Hebrews 4:14-16.
5. What is an intercessory prayer?
6. How can I make improvements in my prayer life?

LESSON TWO

OBEDIENCE

LESSON TEXT
DEUTERONOMY 28:1-14

1. And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth:
2. And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God.
3. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field.
4. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep.
5. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store.
6. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out.
7. The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways.
8. The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.
9. The LORD shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, and walk in his ways.
10. And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of thee.
11. And the LORD shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers to give thee.
12. The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow.
13. And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them:
14. And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand, or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

INTRODUCTION

Obedience is the active response to something one hears, rather than passive listening. According to the Scriptures, God demands that his revelation be taken as the rule for man's whole life. The Bible teaches that isolated acts of worship or homage toward God do not substitute for a lack of consistent obedience in heart and conduct.

The disobedience of Adam, the first man, and the perfect obedience of the second, Christ Jesus, are two factors which determine the eternal destiny of everyone. Adam's lapse into disobedience brought guilt, condemnation, and death upon the entire human family. Christ's unwavering obedience secured

righteousness and eternal life for all who believe on him. Contrasted throughout the Bible are the influences brought upon mankind by Adam and by Christ. Faith in the gospel and in Christ is obedience, for God commands it. Whereas, unbelief is disobedience.

REWARDS FOR OBEDIENCE

The Scriptures describe Satan as being cunning, subtle and as a roaring lion. One of the ways in which he tries to defeat and discourage people is to represent their ideas and beliefs as being ridiculous. This he employed in his approach to Eve and she was deceived. Noah, undoubtedly, was confronted with ridicule as he prepared the ark. Rain had never fallen upon the face of the earth. Noah spent one hundred twenty years in warning a wicked generation of the wrath of God to come, and in preparing the ark. Read Genesis 6:9-22. We can only imagine the ridicule which Noah endured. However, Noah was obedient unto God and great was his reward. Read Hebrews 11:7.

In James 1:21-25, Christians are admonished to be doers of the Word and not hearers only. This is to say that God both demands and expects obedience. Read John 8:25-32. In verse twenty-nine, Jesus said, "For I do always those things that please him." Philippians 2:8 states, "And being found in fashion as man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." A Christian should reflect the teachings and characteristics of Christ. Read Philippians 2:6-15. Consider the train of thought presented in verses 12-15, "As ye have always obeyed, exercise your salvation that ye shine as lights in the world." This indicates that an obedient Christian is positioned among the lost where witness and influence for the Gospel can be exerted. Just as a star is readily visible in a dark sky, the obedient Christian life will shine as light in testimony and deed out to the lost. This parallels the teaching of Matthew 5:13-16. The same promises which God made to Israel for obedience are valid today. Great are the rewards promised for obedience!

EXAMPLES OF DISOBEDIENCE

"Thus sayeth the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein." Jeremiah 6:16. This Scripture typifies the enmity which man has for God. Even Children of God sometime become disobedient and rebellious. The remaining verses in Deuteronomy 28, which are not included in the lesson text, warn of the consequences associated with disobedience. In Hebrews 10:26 we find, "For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." This leaves the perpetrator of the sins to pay for the sins.

Even as the Word of the Lord came unto Jonah, "arise, go to Nineveh," Jonah was planning to flee from the presence of the Lord. He paid the fare to board a ship leaving Joppa for Tarshish. Not only did Jonah "pay the fare" for the journey by ship, but he also had a "fare to pay" for his disobedience to God's command. Read Jonah 1,2. God did not allow Jonah to continue in a state of rebellion and disobedience.

Saul, the first king of Israel, had a very humble beginning as king. In the process of time, Saul became exalted and disobedient, usurping the office of Samuel. Again, God would not allow a chosen one to continue in rebellion and disobedience. Saul's disobedience resulted in his being removed as king, 1 Samuel 13:1-14.

A very strong warning is given to the children of God in Ephesians 5:1-6. The sixth verse states, "For because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." God will not let His Children continue in a state of rebellion and disobedience. Proverbs 19:18 and Hebrews 12:5-11 both teach this fundamental principle.

CONCLUSION

John sets forth, in 1 John 2:3-6, a characteristic of genuine knowledge of God: Obedience to His commandments. "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." 1 John 2:4. Often the examples which Christians set forth in their daily life speak louder than the words of their mouth.

After Saul was admonished for his disobedience, Samuel stated to Saul, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." 1 Samuel 15:22. This verse reinforces a teaching found throughout the Scriptures. Religious rituals void of spiritual reality are worthless.

After King Hezekiah was healed by God and fifteen years added unto his life, he sinned in showing the precious things of his domain to an envoy from Babylon. Isaiah explained the consequences of his sins to the king. The king then asked Isaiah, "Is it not good, if peace and good be in my days?" 2 Kings 20:19. This shows forth an attitude which a child of God must guard against. The actions which we take not only affect us, but can affect a generation which will follow after us. We do have a responsibility to the next generation! Saul's disobedience caused the kingdom to be taken from him, affecting the passing of the kingdom to the lineage of Saul. 1 Samuel 13:13,14. Also, the teachings of Deuteronomy 5:27-29 indicate that obedience secures our well being, along with that of succeeding generations. Churches exist today and the gospel is preached today because previous generations were obedient to God.

One of the clearest principles set forth in the Scriptures is that of "sowing and reaping." Read Galatians 6:7 and Psalm 62-12. This principle is certainly true in regard to obedience and disobedience. The fruits of obedience are the blessings of God; whereas, disobedience has as its fruit the displeasure of God.

Obedience in the life of a Christian is much like sanctification, it is an on-going process which must be exercised continuously. A child of God must know the Word of God and put forth an effort to apply the Word in daily life.

This parting thought ties into Lesson 3. Paul, in speaking to the Athenians, stated, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." Acts 17:30. This sets forth the first command which man must obey in order to have a right relationship with his Maker.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

John 14:20-24, Genesis 22:1-14, 1 Samuel 13:1-14,
1 Samuel 12:6-19, Genesis 6:9-22, Deuteronomy 32:44-47

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is obedience?
2. Explain 1 John 2:3-6 relative to obedience.
3. List, and discuss the lives of five Old Testament characters that might be considered as having lived obedient lives.
4. Do the same for five New Testament Characters.
5. How is Saul's sin of disobedience viewed in 1 Samuel 15:23?

LESSON THREE

REPENTANCE AND FAITH

LESSON TEXT
LUKE 13:1-5 & PSALMS 51:1-13

Luke 13:1-5

1. There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.
2. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things?
3. I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.
4. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?
5. I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

Psalms 51:1-13

1. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.
2. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.
3. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.
4. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.
5. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.
6. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.
7. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
8. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.
9. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.
10. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.
11. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.
12. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.
13. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

INTRODUCTION

Theologians refer to repentance and faith as inseparable graces. Each of these terms has a much deeper meaning in a religious context than is ascribed to them in a secular setting. Repentance is not just a "turning around," but is a change in one's heart about sin to the extent that a change in action occurs. This change is brought on by Godly sorrow. Faith is the attitude whereby man abandons all reliance upon his own merits and abilities in achieving a goal and exercises a complete trust and dependence upon God. Repentance toward God and faith in Christ, for a lost sinner, always equates to salvation.

Not only are repentance and faith necessary for salvation, but they are graces which should compass the life of a Christian. The Scriptures teach that all sin and fall short of the glory of God. When sin enters into the life of a Christian, fellowship with the Father is broken, and fellowship can only be

restored through confession and repentance in faith. We are told in 1 John 2:1, "My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Access to God is always through Christ. Christ is the only means by which a sinning believer can be restored to fellowship with God. Though a Christian has an Advocate with the Father, the ultimate goal for the believer is to overcome sin.

REPENTANCE AND FAITH RELATIVE TO THE UNSAVED

As was noted in Lesson Two, Paul stated to the Athenians, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent:" Acts 17:30. After the initial sin of Adam, fellowship with God was broken. The Scriptures tell us that God came to the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day, walking and calling to Adam. Walking actually means "traversing back and forth." Why was he walking and calling for Adam, "Where art thou?" God is omniscient. God knew where and why Adam was hiding. As has always been the case, God was opening the door of opportunity for repentance. The characteristics exhibited by Adam have been passed to each member of the human family, from generation to generation. Two prominent characteristics of man are evident in Adam's actions: First, Adam endeavored to hide from God. Second, Adam tried to cover his "nakedness" by works of his own hands. Read Genesis 3. Neither action was effective!

Without Divine intervention a lost person would never seek God. In Romans 2:4, Paul stated, "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"

God sought repentance of Adam, Moses and Solomon taught repentance, and Jeremiah and Jonah preached repentance. John the Baptist, in the wilderness of Judea, preached, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matthew 3:2. As stated in our lesson text, Jesus demands repentance. The Apostles taught and preached that salvation comes through repentance and faith in Christ. This is the only remedy for sin. It has been the remedy from eternity past, and it remains as the remedy today. Any religious doctrine which is void of repentance and faith, relative to salvation, is foreign to the teachings of the Scriptures.

What a blessed thought, "An individual, lost and in the bonds of Satan, can be brought into a right relationship with God through repentance and faith." It is understandable that John could say, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." 1 John 3:1.

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matthew 16:26. The most important event which can occur in the life of an individual is to experience the new birth spoken of in John 3. All other life experiences are dwarfed by this. When the Holy Spirit is reproving and drawing, the lost person should heed, for a great danger exists in not heeding this call. Read Proverbs 2:20-33.

REPENTANCE AND FAITH RELATIVE TO THE SAVED

Though the ultimate goal of the Christian is to overcome sin, Satan exerts a very real and present force in this life. Peter stated, in 1 Peter 5:8, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." Paul explains the power of Satan in this manner, "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." Romans 7:19. Sin does find its way into the life of the believer. This suspends fellowship with God. Fellowship can be restored, only by confession and repentance in faith. Confession and repentance are sometimes very hard to achieve, because we lack a true sensitivity and understanding of God's repugnance to sin. However, God knows His own, and He knows how to deal with each of His own.

God exercises discipline in the lives of His children to bring them back into a right relationship with Him. Read Hebrews 12:5-10.

The Scriptures describe David as "A man after God's own heart." David was not perfect, but he sincerely desired to live a righteous life before God and man. Notice in Psalms 51 the sensitivity which David had for his sins. The sins are described in 2 Samuel 11. His sensitivity is shown by the use of phrases involving the first person singular in his prayer. He uses, "my sin," "my transgression," "I sinned," "Mine iniquity," and so on. David did not try to shift the blame onto someone else, but truly confessed to God and repented his sin. Repentance always involves a true and complete confession of sin.

Though David received forgiveness from God for his sin, there were natural consequences of his sin which he paid for in the flesh. Many times this is the case with sin. A sequence of events is set into motion which may stay with the perpetrator throughout life, and even to succeeding generations. Sin can never be taken lightly! This is true for an individual as well as for a nation. Read Jeremiah 8:11-13.

CONCLUSION

Repentance and faith not only bring us into a right relationship with God, but they also enable us to continue in a right relationship with Him. "For we walk by faith, not by sight." 2 Corinthians 5:7.

The Bible presents both the good and bad which occurred in the lives of its characters. This was done by purpose. The lives of the individuals presented are to be a guide for mankind. How discouraging it would be, if only the good side were presented. Believers do stumble, they do fall, and they do live less than perfect lives before God. The Scriptures teach that though a Christian falls, he is not utterly cast down. Read Psalms 37:24, Proverbs 24:16, and 2 Corinthians 4:7-18. Christians live by faith. God supplies the grace that enables the Christian to persevere.

As a closing thought, Satan would like to keep a Christian in a weakened state, void of influence. Often, after having received forgiveness of a transgression, we are unable to forgive ourselves and put the sin behind us. Satan always stands ready to remind us of our sins and to hold them before us. Paul gives good admonition in Hebrews 12:1-2, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witness, let us lay aside every weight, and sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race which is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." The Christian must pick-up and move forward. Thanks be unto God that we do have Jesus as our Advocate!

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Matthew 3:1-12, John 3:16, 1 John 1:5-10, Jonah 3:5-10, Ephesians 2:4-10, Proverbs 1:20-33, 2 Chronicles 7:12-15

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is repentance?
2. What is faith?
3. How are the two related?
4. Discuss Romans 2:4.
5. Discuss Acts 16:30,31,

LESSON FOUR

SACRIFICE

LESSON TEXT
ROMANS 12:1-3

1. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.
2. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.
3. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

INTRODUCTION

Sacrifice literally means to slaughter, or that which is slain. The offering of one's possessions in sacrifice to a "deity" was common to virtually all ancient societies. Although frequent references to sacrifice are made in all periods of biblical history, a formal sacrificial system was not instituted in Israel until the time of Moses. The first seventeen chapters in Leviticus are devoted to explaining the occasions for sacrifice and the correct rigid procedures to be followed in offering a sacrifice. All the sacrifices and offerings made by the children of God were only types and shadows showing forth that which was to come. They all point to John 3:16, the focal point of the Scriptures. Two principles shine throughout Israel's worship of God in sacrifices and offerings. First, "the best for God, without blemish" was always observed. Leviticus 1:3; 2:1,14. Second, provision was made for everyone as is shown by the words, "Such as he is able to get." Leviticus 14:22.

THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST

The Book of Hebrews, more than any other writing in the Bible, ties the Old and New Testaments together. Much stress is given in this book to the sacrifice of Christ, to his death, and to the fact that his sacrifice was both perfect and complete. John the Baptist was given the responsibility to announce the beginning of the Grace Covenant to the human family. This he did while preaching repentance throughout Judeah and baptizing in the river Jordan. "The Next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." John 1:29. This New Covenant, to become effective, required the sacrifice of Christ. Though necessary, the sinless life of Christ did not establish the New Testament. Christ's death, which involved His shed blood, is the binding agent of the New Testament. "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." Hebrews 9:22. The Scriptures teach that the Old Testament sacrifices could not take away sin, they were only a temporary covering. Hebrews 10:4.

Isaiah 35 sets before the nation of Israel a message of hope, a message pointing to the New Covenant. In verse eight we find, "And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." This verse is prophetic concerning the plan of salvation. Some believe and teach that multiple plans of salvation have existed since the fall of man. Some do err therein by leaning unto their own understanding and substituting that way which

seemeth right unto a man for God's way. Read Proverbs 14:12. God's redemptive plan for mankind has always been through Christ, the sacrificial Lamb of God. This plan was in place before the world was created. Read Revelations 13:8 and Matthew 25:34. The sacrificial sin offerings made to God through the centuries of time were only temporary coverings for sin. Christ's sacrifice on the cross covered and extinguished the guilt for all those past sins.

THE SACRIFICES OF A CHRISTIAN

In the closing verses of Hebrews 11, a description is given of some of the trials and tribulations which the children of God have been called upon to endure. This is followed by an interesting statement in Hebrews 12:1,2. "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." The cross is an icon which represents the sacrifices of our Lord and Savior best. The Scriptures teach that an obedient and committed Christian will have crosses to bear and sacrifices to make during their walk through life. "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me." Luke 9:23. The Scripture text for this lesson states, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." When Lordship is granted to God by a believer, the body, which has been an instrument of sin, is brought under subjection and it becomes an instrument whereby the righteousness of God is made manifest. This complete involvement of a believer in the will of God is the means by which the believer becomes "a living sacrifice." The presentation of a body as a living sacrifice unto God, like sanctification, is an ongoing daily process and is not a one time occurrence. Notice that this is only reasonable service for the children of God.

Paul was teaching along these same lines when he wrote, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." 1 Corinthians 6:19,20. Though salvation is the free gift of God, it is impossible to comprehend the great price which Christ willingly paid to atone for the sins of mankind.

CONCLUSION

Jesus stated in Matthew 6:24, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye can not serve God and mammon." Sin, even to a Christian, can be very enticing. However, we as children of God must remember, there are places we can not go, and there are things we can not do. The desires of the flesh must be sacrificed, if we hope to have an influence on those who do not know Jesus as their personal Savior. In corresponding with Timothy, Paul said, "For bodily exercise profiteth little, but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." 1 Timothy 4:8. Great promises are made in the Scriptures to those who live obedient and sanctified lives.

"And King David said unto Ornan, Nay, but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is thine for the Lord, nor offer burnt offerings without cost. 1 Chronicles 21:24. David was not willing to offer a sacrifice unto God which did not involve a cost unto him. In general, anything worth doing requires sacrifice. This certainly is true in being obedient to God's commands.

There are principles set forth in the Scriptures upon which good Christians might disagree. However, there are some areas where no room for disagreement exists. The New Testament Church has held to these principles since the day Jesus began to call out disciples from those presenting fruits meet for repentance and were baptized by John

the Baptist. To deny these principles is to deny the Christian Faith. These Biblical truths can not be compromised, the divine creation, the depravity of man, the inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures, the virgin birth of Christ, the deity of Christ, the substitutionary atonement of Christ's sacrifice, His bodily resurrection, His physical return, salvation through grace and by faith, and the existence of a literal heaven and hell. A church, when it starts to teach contrary to these principles, is transformed into a social institution. God's people, down through some twenty centuries of time, have been persecuted for teaching and adhering to these principles. We also may be called upon some day to make a stand on these principles. If so, sacrifice will be required on our part.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Genesis 22:1-14, 2 Corinthians 11:24-31, Collisians 3:1-6, Phillipians 3:8-15, Hebrews 10:12-14, 1 Peter 3:13-18, Hebrews 9:12-28, Hebrews 11:32-4, Peter 4:12-19, Romans 12:1-14

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Discuss the sufferings of Paul which are listed in 2 Corinthians 11: 24-31.
2. How did David view a sacrifice which was void of cost?
3. What is meant by the phrase "a living sacrifice?"
4. Discuss Hebrews 9:12-28.
5. How does Peter view suffering as described in 1 Peter 4?
6. How might adherence to the admonition given in Jude 3 bring about suffering for a Christian?
7. List some doctrines of the Christian faith which have definite, unchanging, and unalterable content.
8. In your opinion, what change is brought upon "the faith" by denying a doctrine listed in question seven?

LESSON FIVE

COMMITMENT

LESSON TEXT
JOSHUA 24:14-18

14. Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD.
15. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.
16. And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods;
17. For the LORD our God, he it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed:
18. And the LORD drave out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the LORD; for he is our God.

INTRODUCTION

Words used in a secular context often have a diluted meaning to the meaning ascribed to them in a religious context. This is the case with the use of the word "commitment." A dictionary might define commitment as an entrustment. From a theological perspective, commitment is an entrustment and a dedication of our complete being to God. This involves the dedication of the mind, body, spirit, and soul to the service of God.

For the Christian, true commitment will encompass both sacrifice and suffering. God's Will and God's work must occupy a preeminent position in the life of a committed Christian. This is a complete yielding of Lordship to Christ. Jesus teaches this in Matthew 16:21-27. A commitment to follow Him involves both self-denial and the burden of cross bearing.

The events described in the book of Joshua span a period of about forty years. After wandering in the wilderness for forty years, under the leadership of Moses, God selected Joshua to lead his chosen people into the Land of Promise. Joshua had served as a military advisor and aide to Moses during their pilgrimage through the wilderness. Because of his commitment to God and his demand of exact obedience to God's word, he was able to subdue the land of Canaan and to oversee the proper apportionment of the land to the twelve tribes. Joshua served God well. From his first acts recorded in Joshua 1 to his farewell address to the nation, Joshua set forth a shining example of commitment and obedience to God. Joshua was a committed servant and aide to Moses. A key characteristic for successful leadership is developed by being an obedient and dedicated servant. Joshua was nearing the end of life when he proclaimed to Israel, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." This verse certainly describes Joshua's commitment to God.

EXAMPLES OF COMMITMENT

Daniel was the greatest of the Hebrew prophets during their captivity in Babylon. As a very young man, he was carried away

from Jerusalem into Babylon. Daniel spent more than sixty years in captivity, facing many trials and challenges. He, in all those years, grew stronger in his commitment to God.

Babylon, a land of idolatry and paganism, often is used to typify sin in the world. One of the first affronts brought upon Daniel was an attempt at changing his name. This was done to help destroy Daniel's identity as one of God's children. Also, Daniel was appointed a daily provision of the king's meat and wine. This was done that Daniel might "stand before the king." This was intended to further undermine his identity as a child of God. "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank." Daniel 1:8. This shows, under very trying circumstances, the strength of the commitment which this young man made to God. From his youth, Daniel was determined to be obedient unto God's law. Always, in crisis, we find Daniel turning to God in prayer. His enemies tried to use his worship of the True and Living God as a means to destroy him. Daniel 6:10,11. The Book of Daniel presents a vivid picture, a picture of an obedient servant who lived totally committed to God. Read Daniel 1,6.

The character and life of Joseph is set forth in the last thirteen chapters of Genesis~. Here again, a record is given of a young man who lived a committed life to God under very trying circumstances. Though he was ill treated on a number of occasions, Joseph was always able to show forth a forgiving and loving spirit toward those who offended him. Of all the Old Testament characters, Joseph probably reflects the largest number of characteristics of Christ, and he has the least negative criticism associated with his life. Because of Joseph's firm commitment, God not only prospered him, but God enabled those who associated with him to share in his blessings. Read Genesis 39:4-6, 39:20-23, and 41:37-44.

"When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." Proverbs 16:7. This statement certainly is born out by the lives of Joseph and Daniel. Both found great favor from the leaders of the nations where they were held captive.

In 1 Samuel 1, an account of the events leading to the birth of Samuel is given. Hannah, being barren, prayed to God and vowed a vow, saying, "If you will give unto me a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life." God honored the prayer of Hannah with the birth of Samuel. Samuel became one of the greatest of the judges and prophets to serve Israel. Hannah was committed to keeping the vow which she made to God. How hard it must have been for Hannah to remain true to her commitment! She left her son in the care of Eli the priest from the time of his weaning, seeing him only from year to year. Hannah's resolve to fulfill her commitment can be understood and appreciated from the statement, "Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice." 1 Samuel 2:18. Notice in 1 Samuel 2:21 the blessings of God which were bestowed upon Hannah and her husband, Elkanah, because of the commitment Hannah made unto the Lord.

"And Peter remembered the words of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out and wept bitterly." Matthew 26:75. After this event in Peter's life, a resolve and commitment can be detected which he did not previously have. In the accounts recorded in Acts 3-5, we find Peter boldly preaching and reasoning with the same Jewish leaders who passed judgment upon Jesus. His dedication to Christ and to the Gospel is evident in the statement, "But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the eyes of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, Judge ye." Acts 4:19. Peter's commitment can also be seen in his taking the gospel unto the Gentiles. This was an act which Jewish teachings and tradition would not permit. However, Peter was obedient unto the command which God gave him. This is recorded in Acts 10,11. The same boldness which Peter exhibited on the Day

of Pentecost is evident in his two epistles. The closing verse of his second epistle sums the objectives of a committed Christian. "But grow in grace, and i n the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory, both now and forever. Amen." 2 Peter 3:18.

EXAMPLES OF LACK OF COMMITMENT

Some individuals discussed in the Scriptures show a complete lack of commitment, while others are portrayed as having lapses in their commitment. We will consider one of each type.

Esau, son of Issaic and the twin brother of Jacob, showed forth a complete disregard for the things of God. He is portrayed as a self-centered individual, willing to trade his birthright for immediate gratification in the form of a bowl of pottage. A bleak picture is painted for Esau in Hebrews 12:16,17.

Samson, like Samuel and John the Baptist, was a Nazerite from his birth. He should have been an example unto Israel of commitment to God. However, he became known in Israel for his great physical strength and for his frequent lapses into moral weakness. Samson fell short of God's standard with his sins of self-indulgence and lack of self-discipline. His life is a clear warning against lack of self-discipline and commitment. Though Samson had moral weakness in his life, God used him to benefit the nation of Israel. Even with the deficiencies in his life, Samson is listed in Hebrews 11:32 as a hero of faith. Read Judges 13-16.

CONCLUSION

That we should be committed unto God is evident from the first of the ten commandments. Jesus, in addressing a Jewish audience who was well aware that man was created in the likeness and image of God, asked for a coin. Jesus said, "Whose is this image and subscription?" The response was Caesar's. "And Jesus answering said unto them, Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things which are God's." Mark 12:17. Though we may have many obligations in life, our principle obligation is to God, and our commitment must be to Him. Read Romans 12:1,2 and Hebrews 12:1-3.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Exodus 20, 1 Peter 4:12-19, Ecclesiastes 5:4,5, Psalms 37:3-9, Ephesians 6:10-18, Ruth 1:15-18, Ruth 4

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Explain the phrase "Daniel purposed in his heart," of Daniel 1:8.
2. Discuss the commitment of Ruth and of Boaz.
3. From a natural point of view, discuss Samuel 2:19.
4. Discuss Genesis 39:9.
5. What does 1 Corinthians 6:19,20 teach about the Christian's responsibilities to God?