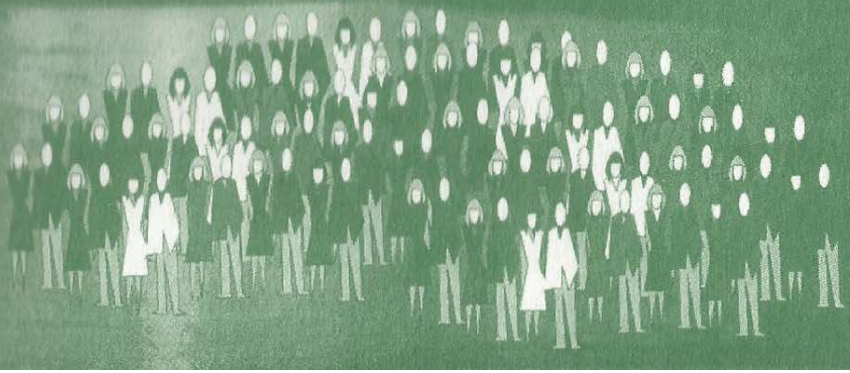
Ages 10 - 13

Missionary Baptist

Vacation Bible School Literature

"There Is No New Thing Under the Sun"

Ecc. 1:9



The Missionary Baptist
Vacation Bible School Literature Committee presents

"No New Thing Under The Sun"

Vacation Bible School Lessons for Ages 10 - 13

Written by Sister Janet Carlock, Sister Janet Hill,
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LESSON ONE

SEARCHING FOR SATISFACTION

LESSON TEXT
ECCLESIASTES 2:1-15

1. I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity.
2. I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?
3. I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life.
4. I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards:
5. I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits:
6. I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees:
7. I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me:
8. I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts.
9. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me.
10. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labor: and this was my portion of all my labor.
11. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.
12. And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what can the man do that cometh after the king? Even that which hath been already done.
13. Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness.
14. The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all.
15. Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity.

INTRODUCTION

Our theme this year for Vacation Bible School is "There Is No New Thing Under the Sun." Each of us believes that the problems we face or that are happening in our day and time are new and have never been faced by anyone before. It is often said that young people today face more temptations than anyone before them. As we study this week, think about the problems faced by the bible characters and determine whether our problems today are new and different—greater than theirs—or is there truly no new thing under the sun.

The subject for this lesson is searching for satisfaction. We spend our lives looking for things we believe will make us happy or sat-

isfied. If I only had this outfit, type of bike, CD player, car or other possessions which we feel would fulfill our desires, my life would be complete — I would be happy or satisfied. However, when we acquire these things we find that they do not bring happiness or satisfaction (Ec. 2:7).

DISCUSSION OF LESSON TEXT

In our lesson text we find Solomon conducting his search for life's meaning or satisfaction. His search was conducted as an experiment. He first tried pursuing pleasure (Ec. 2:1) and found that this was vanity or meaningless.

As we read the verses in Ecclesiastes, we find that Solomon began grand public works programs, bought slaves, had many wives and concubines, studied complex matters, became extremely wealthy and supported the arts, but none of these pursuits gave him satisfaction (Ec. 2:4-8).

Solomon had built a huge home, a Temple, a kingdom, a family (I Kings 3-11) but in the course of history it would all be ruined. In Psalm 127 Solomon states, "Except the Lord build the house, they Labor in vain that build it." At the end of his experiment in finding life's meaning, Solomon summarized his attempts as "vexation of spirit" (Ec. 2:11). Even when Solomon considered wisdom, he decided that the wise man will die like anyone else. However, it was his conclusion that it was better to be wise than foolish, to live with good judgment than spend your life in ignorance. Both wealth and wisdom are dead-end pursuits in providing satisfaction in life. This thought caused Solomon to conclude that wisdom, while beneficial, is futile. Since we are limited in our understanding, it is important that we come to know GOD who is infinite and all-knowing.

THE PRODIGAL SON

In Luke 15:11-32 we read about a father who had two sons. One of the sons, the younger, asked his father to give him his inheritance. After receiving his portion of his father's estate, he packed all of his things and left home. He felt that the "grass was greener" elsewhere.

He left home and traveled into "a far country" (Luke 15:13). There he engaged in many worldly activities which he thought would bring him pleasure. As a result of this, he lost all of his money and possessions. He was left with nothing. When this happened, he thought things were bad but a famine occurred in the land where he was living. He had no money, food or place to stay. He knew he had to find work or starve. The job he got was feeding the swine (pigs).

According to the law of Moses, pigs were unclean (Leviticus 11:2-80; Deut. 14:8). This meant they couldn't be eaten or used for sacrifices. In order to protect themselves from defilement, Jews would not even touch pigs. For a Jew to stoop to feeding pigs was a great humiliation.

This young man not only fed the pigs but was so hungry that he ate the food that the pigs were eating. He had truly sunk to great depths. At this low time in his life he began to think about home and the fact that his father's servants had plenty to eat while he was starving. He then decided to return home and beg for his father's forgiveness.

This young man was rebellious. He wanted to live life as he pleased. He had to sink to a very low point before he "came to himself." There was no satisfaction in the worldly pleasures (Luke 15:18).

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

1. Your friends have just gotten a Tommy Hilfiger outfit. You want one too but your parents don't have the money to buy you one. When you are at the mall with your friends, you have an opportunity to steal one. What would you do? Would this bring you satisfaction?
2. You have friends whose parents seem to have everything — a large house, swimming pool, cars, and other earthly possessions. However, they complain all the

continued

time about wanting more or bigger and better things. Why do you think this happens? Can we ever be satisfied with the things we have?

SUMMARY

In today's world young people are looking for material possessions, activities to bring happiness or satisfaction just as Solomon searched for, or the prodigal son left home to find. However, they both found that none of these things would bring them happiness. In all our accomplishments, even the big ones, our good feelings are temporary. Security or self worth are not found in these accomplishments but far beyond them in the love of GOD. Both Solomon and the prodigal son realized this.

As we reflect on these two examples of searching for satisfaction, we can see that they are not any different from us today. Is your goal in life to search for satisfaction in material things or to search for GOD who gives satisfaction? Without GOD as your foundation, all you have lived for will one day be useless to you. Think about what you consider worthwhile in your life. Will you look back one day and decide that these were "vanity and vexations of spirit?"

QUESTIONS

1. What have you thought would satisfy you or make you happy? When you received this, were you pleased or did you have something else you wanted?
2. Compare the prodigal son to a young person today.
3. Who was Solomon? What did he say all of his possessions were?
4. What brings real satisfaction?

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Isaiah 55:1-4; Luke 12:15-21;
Psalms 36:7-9; Psalms 128:1-6;
Songs of Solomon 3:1-4; Psalms 38:1-15
Psalms 116:1-10; John 4:1-15;
I Kings 3:5-13

LESSON TWO

TEMPTATIONS AND CHOICES

LESSON TEXT
GENESIS 39:7-21 & JOSHUA 7:20-25

Gen 39:7-21

7. And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me.
8. But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand;
9. There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?
10. And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her.
11. And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within.
12. And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.
13. And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth,
14. That she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice:
15. And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out.
16. And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home.
17. And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me:
18. And it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out.
19. And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled.
20. And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison.
21. But the LORD was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

Josh 7:20-25

20. And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus have I done:
21. When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.
22. So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it.

continued

23. And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD.
24. And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor.
25. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? The LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones.

INTRODUCTION

Find Proverbs 1:10-16. Read this passage to yourself or out loud to the class. Next answer these three questions: (1) What is wisdom? (2) What is peer pressure? (3) What is consent?

Have you ever been put in a situation with peers that made you feel uncomfortable? Why did you feel uncomfortable? Could it be because they were asking you to do something that you didn't think was right? Peer pressure is a very powerful mechanism. Satan uses peer pressure to lure young people into committing a sin against GOD. Your friends might tempt you with stories such as "It only takes a little effort and you can have this great _____!" or "All you have to do is follow me!" or "You'll be the most popular kid in school!" These temptations lure us in "hook, line, and sinker" because we all long to be "one of the in-crowd." Our desire to be in the popular crowd takes over our whole being (mind and body) and creates an "appetite" that in turn causes us to do anything to "feed that appetite!"

Some examples of things that lure us are as follows: popularity, meeting a possible girlfriend or boyfriend, drugs, alcohol, or taking a dare to prove our bravery.

We must learn to make choices. That means the right choices based on long-ranged goals and not on short-ranged pleasures. Sometimes this means staying away from people who have a negative effect on us or seem to always be leading us in the wrong direction.

LESSON TEXT

In the lesson text from Genesis, Joseph resisted some very strong temptations from Potiphar's wife. Sometimes we must physically remove ourselves as much as possible from the temptation.

In the lesson text from Joshua, Achan was of the tribe of Judah. He had participated in the Battle of Jericho. GOD had instructed Joshua to destroy the entire city and everything in it. However, Achan had purposely disobeyed GOD's direct order! Achan had taken riches and clothing from the city of Jericho and hid them from Joshua and the rest of Israel. GOD's anger was kindled against all of the children of Israel as a result of the actions of Achan.

When Israel went to battle against Ai, the Israelites were badly defeated. Joshua could not understand why this would happen after the victory against Jericho. He tore his clothes and prayed to GOD. GOD informed Joshua that Israel had sinned against HIM. Achan's sin put the whole nation of Israel in danger. Men died. Israel's army was fearful of its enemy and its leaders faltered.

As a result of his sin, Achan had to suffer the consequences. His temptation to take the riches from Jericho resulted in he and his entire family being stoned to death. In addition, all of the things that Achan had taken were burned after they had stoned him and his family to death.

CONTROLLING YOUR ANGER

Look at Proverbs 16:32. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." Anger is an emotion that needs to stay under control. This control does not come with

age! There are many adults who still lose control of their temper. But self-control can be learned, even at a young age. Many times when we get angry at others, we also feel the need for revenge. Revenge is evil. It can eat away at our whole self (mind and body). At times such as these, we must pray even harder for self-control and ask GOD what we should do.

Now, take a look at Proverbs 25:28. "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls." Have you ever seen a toddler throw a temper tantrum when he/she did not get something they wanted? As a teenager, do you continue to throw temper tantrums? Let's hope not! The reason you do not throw those tantrums is because you have developed self-control. As we obey GOD who guides us through the Holy Spirit, we learn self-control.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IN THE FOLLOWING SITUATIONS?

1. Your friends want you to take something that they stole from a store and hide it in your house. They tell you "It'll be okay, you won't get in trouble for this. You didn't do anything."
2. Your family is having a tough time "making ends meet." You are walking along the street one day and you come upon an envelope. The envelope has a lot of money in it and a person's name. You begin thinking about keeping the money to help your family. "My family needs this money. It'll be all right."
3. One of your friends makes fun of you and embarrasses you in front of a large group of people. Your face turns red and you run off to the restroom. It would be great to get even with that person. You didn't deserve that horrible treatment from anyone! You begin to contemplate your course of action.

CONCLUSION

We make hundreds of choices each day, such as what clothes to wear, which homework assignment to do first, and which TV show to watch. But sometimes temptations arise that cause us to make bad choices. Whenever difficult dilemmas come, pray for guidance from GOD. Don't rush to make a decision just because someone is pressuring you. Take your time. And with GOD's help you will make the right choice!

QUESTIONS

1. What was Achan's sin toward GOD?
2. Why do most people fall to temptations?
3. How can you work at making the right choices?
4. Describe a time when you had a difficult choice to make. How did you handle it?

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Genesis 3:1; I Corinthians 21:1
2 Corinthians 11:3; I Thessalonians 3:5
Genesis 13:10-13; Proverbs 1:10
Proverbs 4:14; Romans 6:13; Ephesians 6:13
2 Peter 3:17; Proverbs 23:29-35
Revelation 9:21; Revelation 18:23
Luke 4:5-8; Jeremiah 35:1-6

LESSON THREE

DEALING WITH RIDICULE AND DECEIT

LESSON TEXT
2 CORINTHIANS 4:8-18

8. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;
9. Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;
10. Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.
11. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.
12. So then death worketh in us, but life in you.
13. We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;
14. Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.
15. For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.
16. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.
17. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;
18. While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

INTRODUCTION

The word ridicule is defined as words or actions intended to evoke contemptuous laughter at a person or thing. Deceit is defined as misrepresentation, deception, or a trick.

No one likes to be made fun of. When someone makes fun of us the first thing that enters our mind is...let's get even! Yet, getting even is not part of GOD's plan. We must study the Bible to find what GOD has in store for us as Christians.

LESSON TEXT

Paul was a very important person in Bible history. Paul went from persecuting Christians to being a preacher of GOD's word. In the lesson text, the Apostle Paul reminds us that though we may be at the end of our rope, with GOD we are never at the end of hope. I'm reminded of the song, "Thread of Hope." If you know this song, read through the words. Part of the words are: "If you should slip and reach rope's end, you'll find the hem of His garment, so don't let go of that last thread of hope." Despair is a terrible state to be in. As a young person, with ever-changing emotions, you can go from a high, excited feeling to a low, down-and-out feeling.

Our earth-troddened bodies are subjected to pain, suffering, and despair. Paul encourages us to keep on going. It is easy to just quit when it seems that everything around us is causing us pain or frustration. Everyone faces problems. But the key is how we

approach those problems. Part of verse 16 of our lesson text says, "...but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." Paul suffered many hardships during his ministry. Some of the persecutions that Paul endured were: stripes from beatings, beaten with rods, once he was stoned, and he was also shipwrecked at sea four times. It was through these hardships that Paul did his greatest preaching of GOD's word. We must realize that there is a purpose to our hardships and suffering. It should remind us of CHRIST's suffering for us on the cross. Sometimes our suffering comes to humble us. At times such as these we must pray for strength from GOD and HE will provide what we need.

HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH RIDICULE?

Most young adults have a tendency to constantly put each other down. "Put downs" seem to grow to the point that all that comes out of our mouths are insults. Have you ever wondered how the person you put down feels when you ridicule him/her? Even though we seem to brush off those "put downs" on the outside, those words still hurt us on the inside. Don't fall into the same trap that many of your friends are in. Be considerate to all people that you come in contact with. GOD will bless you for your actions!

Look at Matthew 5:11-16. Verse 11 says, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Persecution can be good because it takes our mind off of earthly things and it strengthens those who endure with GOD's help. That strength comes from GOD and shows to others around us our faithfulness to GOD. According to verse 12, "...for great is your reward in heaven..." for those that endure persecution.

A perfect example of strength coming from persecution is the story of Job. Read Job 13:1-16. Job's friends looked upon Job's troubles as punishment for sins that Job had committed. They looked at the outward man and not the inward man. In verses 13 through 16, Job tells his friends to leave him alone. Job said, "let come on me what will." No matter what perils GOD sent his way, Job was willing to endure them because he knew that GOD would be with him. "...yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him. He also shall be my salvation: for an hypocrite shall not come before him." The suffering that Job endured strengthened his faith. Job set an example for all of us to follow.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IN THE FOLLOWING SITUATIONS?

1. Some of your friends go to church with you on Sunday morning. They hear a Spirit-filled sermon and testimonies of many Christians. The next day at school, one of your friends starts questioning some of the sermon and testimonies that he/she heard. They ridicule you in front of others that do not attend a Missionary Baptist church. What should you do?
2. You're having a bad week at school. You get mad at your friends, you make a bad grade on a big test, you dump your tray in the lunchroom all over someone, and if that's not bad enough, you have a pop quiz in math class! Then, you find out that your friends are talking bad about you! What's going to happen next? How do you go about confronting your friends?
3. A lost friend is having a difficult time at home. You ask him/her to go to church with you. He says yes and attends a Sunday morning service with you. Later, that friend makes fun of the service, he attended. How do you talk to that friend without putting him down? How do you explain the plan of salvation to your lost friend?

continued

WHAT IS DECEIT?

Have you ever told a "little white lie"? Did you think that everything would be okay because it was just a little lie? Whether the lie is small or large, it's still a lie! Even little lies can grown into bigger ones! Many times when you tell a lie, you have to tell others to keep the first one hidden. In addition, no matter how big or small, a lie is never hidden from GOD.

Look at Genesis 12:11-13. Abram (Abraham) was entering Egypt with his wife Sarai (Sarah). Abram was afraid that the Pharaoh would take Sarai and then kill him. So he told the Pharaoh that Sarai was his sister. Sarai was his sister, but she was also his wife. Abram lost faith in GOD's protection. In Abram's day this was called a half-truth. A half-truth is still a lie. Abram's lie only compounded his problems.

Read the 27th chapter of Genesis. This chapter is about Jacob deceiving his father Isaac. Esau, being the firstborn, sold his birthright to his younger brother Jacob. Jacob in turn deceived his father into thinking that he was Esau with the help of his mother Rebekah. This deceit came at a great cost. Jacob's descendants and Esau's descendants became warring nations. Jacob was deceived by his uncle Laban. His family was continually torn by strife. Jacob never saw his mother again after he left his home, fearful that his brother Esau may kill him.

Deceit comes with a price. Always remember, when you try to deceive someone that you are never deceiving GOD. GOD sees and knows everything! When you deceive, punishment will always come.

SUMMARY

Ridicule from people you care about is often hard to take. It takes strength from GOD to help us overcome the temptations of getting even with those who ridicule us. Don't get caught up in the web of getting even and hurting others. Remember those people are watching you. Deceit is a powerful tool of destruction! Don't be deceived into using that tool! Remember that there will always be a price to pay for each action of deceit!

QUESTIONS

1. Describe Abram's deceit in Egypt.
2. How did Jacob's deceit cause him heartache?
3. Name some of the ridicule that the Apostle Paul endured.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Matthew 19:27-29; Luke 7:31-35
I Samuel 1:12-18; Nehemiah 4:1-6
Acts 26:24-32; Matthew 10:32-37
Job 2:9-13; Job 13:1-16; 2 Samuel 10:1-5
2 Corinthians 11:21-30; Jeremiah 38:1-13
Acts 4:1-31

LESSON FOUR

GOD'S LOVE

LESSON TEXT
ROMANS 5:1-11 & 8:35-39

Rom 5:1-11

1. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:
2. By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.
3. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;
4. And patience, experience; and experience, hope:
5. And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.
6. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.
7. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.
8. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
9. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.
10. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.
11. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

Rom 8:35-39

35. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?
36. As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.
37. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.
38. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,
39. Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

INTRODUCTION

Love as defined by Webster is a powerful emotion felt for another person manifesting itself in deep affection. Love is a very strong emotional feeling we possess that we are able to transmit to one another. In both the Old Testament and New Testament we find numerous accounts of God's love for us and the sacrifices HE made. The great love which GOD has for us makes salvation possible (John 3:16). GOD's love is great and references can be found to it in various passages in the Bible (Romans 5:8 and I John 3:16). GOD's love is great for the saved and unsaved alike. He demonstrated his love by dying on the cross. He gave us the privilege to choose salvation and have eternal life. This only came about because of the depth of love GOD has for us.

continued

GOD'S LOVE FOR THE UNSAVED

GOD is very unselfish and desires to share HIS love with everyone. HE even loved the thief on the cross (Luke 24:39-43). The thief had not been saved, until the day he was crucified. Jesus was hanging on the cross with a crown of thorns on his head. His hands and feet had been pierced with nails (Matthew 27:29-31), yet he still was able to love the soldiers who had done this to him and save the thief hanging on the cross beside him (Luke 23:32-34). Throughout the Bible the Lord has loved the unsaved individual even though he was mistreated. HIS love is so great that HE has enough to save everyone both great and small, young or old. If only we believe and trust in the Lord, salvation is ours. This is only granted because of the love the Lord has for us.

There was a man that had two sons. One of the sons stayed home with his Father and helped make the riches and tend to the land. The other son left and wasted his riches, leaving nothing for himself to survive. He came back to his Father, asking for forgiveness, knowing his Father would accept him. He came home and was welcomed with open arms by his Father; even a fatted calf was killed for his homecoming. This caused his brother to resent the welcome his Father gave him. The Father explained to his son who had stayed home that he still loved his other son even though he had left home and his whereabouts were unknown (Luke 15:11-32). GOD does the same for us when we open our hearts up to HIM and ask for forgiveness. HE is there to put HIS arms around us and welcome us home. GOD's love is a love that will last forever, and we know once we have HIS love in our heart, nothing can take it away (Romans 8:35-39).

GOD'S LOVE FOR THE SAVED

GOD's love for the Saved is so great we often find it hard to understand how one could love and forgive so much. With the amount of love GOD has, HE is able to forgive and, most of all, save our souls. If we look at Job, we can see how much the love of GOD was penetrated through Job. Once we are saved, there is a love in our heart that has no comparison to anything we have ever experienced. HE is always there for us no matter what we do or don't do for HIM. If we look at Job, we can see how much of GOD's love showed through him. Job was a saved and very wealthy man of earthly riches as well as spiritual riches. He was a righteous man in the eyes of GOD and always looked for HIS guidance. Satan tempted Job many times; yet even with things going wrong and some of Job's earthly possessions being destroyed, Job had enough love for GOD that he knew that GOD would not forsake him. Satan told Job of the mishaps that had happened, such as the fields that were left with only the sheep and the servants. Job still knew that GOD loved him and he still called upon the Lord, knowing that he didn't blame the Lord for his trouble. He knew the Lord had blessed him, and that the riches he had came from GOD. The Lord told Satan that Job was HIS servant and he knew Job had GOD's love in his heart. He knew no matter what Satan would tempt Job with, Satan wouldn't conquer because of the strength that the love of GOD had given Job. Satan afflicted Job with sores on his entire body, thinking that he would turn against GOD. Still, Job's love for GOD was strong (Job, chapter 1). Even though Job had times in his life he questioned that GOD loved him, he always was able to turn to GOD and the love of GOD was always there and made his love even stronger.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

1. If your parents would not allow you to attend a party at a friend's house because there would be drinking by adults while you were there, what do you think the reasoning of your parents would be?
2. Is it possible for GOD to love his children even though HE punishes us for things we do wrong and things we don't do that we should do for HIM?
3. How does GOD show HE loves you?
4. How can you show your friends you love them?
5. How does the love of GOD make it possible for us to have salvation?

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

I John 3:1-2; John 3:16; Romans 5:6-11
I John 4:7-12; Jeremiah 31:3; I John 4:16
I Peter 1:4; Romans 5:5; John 15:12
John 13:35; Romans 8:32; John 10:10-19
John 15:13; I Peter 1:22

LESSON FIVE

THE PLAN OF SALVATION

LESSON TEXT
PSALM 116:1-15 & ACTS 16:25-34

Psalm 116:1-15

1. I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications.
2. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.
3. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow.
4. Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.
5. Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful.
6. The LORD preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me.
7. Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.
8. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.
9. I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.
10. I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted:
11. I said in my haste, All men are liars.
12. What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?
13. I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD.
14. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people.
15. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.

Acts 16:25-34

25. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.
26. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.
27. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.
28. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.
29. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,
30. And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?
31. And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.
32. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.
33. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.
34. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

INTRODUCTION

Our lesson topic for tonight is the plan of salvation. Many of us have been in church since we were babies. We have heard the gospel preached and heard the way in which to be saved. Have you heeded this message or have you dismissed it?

GOD's plan of salvation is for all people (Acts 2:21). It was not GOD's will that anyone should die and go to hell. As we study this lesson, think of the love that GOD has for us to provide a plan which included the death of HIS only Son in order for us to live eternally with HIM in heaven.

DISCUSSION OF LESSON TEXT

In Psalms 116 we have a good description of how a person feels when he is under conviction. Verse 3 says, "the sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow." As a result of this, what did the writer of this Psalm do? "Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O, Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul." In verse 5 we can tell that the Lord heard and answered his prayer, because the tone of the Psalm changes. "Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful. The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low and he helped me." We can tell that the LORD answered the writer's prayer and saved his soul.

In the remaining verses praise is given to the LORD for hearing and answering the prayer. Read verses 16-19 of Psalm 116. They are filled with Thanksgiving and praise to the LORD. When we are saved, this is the way we feel at the time of our salvation. It is such a contrast from the feelings we had just prior to our being saved.

As we turn our attention from Psalm 116 to Acts 16:25-34, we find Paul and Silas, two of GOD's disciples, being beaten and thrown into jail because they had been preaching the gospel. Not only were they in jail but were put in stocks and cast into the inner dungeon. Paul and Silas were placed in stocks because the magistrates feared they would escape.

While in this dismal situation, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to GOD. All of the prisoners heard them as they prayed and sang. Their songs and prayers carried the gospel message of salvation. Christians should always be mindful of the way they live before others — regardless of their circumstances - because people may be reading their lives. (Your influence on the unsaved is great!)

As Paul and Silas were praying, there was a great earthquake; the cell doors were opened, and all the prisoners' bands were loosed. This awakened the jailer. Since the jailer was responsible for keeping all of the prisoners in jail or his life would be in danger, the jailer drew his sword to kill himself. However, Paul called out to him to do himself no harm; all the prisoners were — all accounted for. At this point the jailer checked to see if Paul was being truthful. When he discovered that all the prisoners were really there, he fell down before Paul and Silas, asking, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They told the jailer that he must "Believe on the Lord, Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Paul and Silas preached the gospel to the jailer and all that were in his house, instructing them about what they must do to be saved. The jailer and all of his house were saved that night. The next morning the magistrate sent word that Paul and Silas should be released.

THE PLAN OF SALVATION

The lesson text has given us two of many examples throughout the Bible where people were saved. It was GOD's plan before the world was formed that man would have a way to attain salvation (I Corinthians 2:2-8, Titus 1:2). This plan was built around the death of Jesus, GOD's only begotten Son (I Peter 1:18-21). Jesus fulfilled all the requirements as a sacrifice for our sins. HE and HE alone was found worthy to accomplish this task (Hebrews 4:15, II Cor. 5:21, Hebrews 2:17-18). There is no other way to be saved except through Christ (John 10:9, Acts 14:12).

continued

Christ made salvation possible for all (Titus 2:11, Acts 2:21, Romans 10:13) who would believe on HIM with all their heart. Salvation is the gift of GOD (John 3:16, 4:10, Romans 10:13, 8:32). Showing HIS great love for us, Jesus took on himself our sins. HE was sinless but suffered death on a cross to atone for sins. After paying the price for our sins, Jesus offered us salvation — the new life HE bought for us. How much GOD must have loved us to give HIS only Son that we might have eternal life! What a tremendous price to pay!

This great gift which Jesus purchased for us may be obtained by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9). We can do nothing within ourselves which would merit salvation. This is clearly stated in Galatians 2:16. It is by GOD's grace that we are saved (Acts 15:11, Romans 3:24, 5:15; Titus 2:11, 3:7). Webster defines grace as "unmerited (undeserved) divine assistance given man for his regeneration, a virtue coming from GOD, mercy pardon, a special favor." According to this definition, we can see that GOD has offered us a pardon for our sins. We cannot receive this pardon on our own; it must be with GOD's help.

There are conditions under which we may obtain this pardon. We must repent of our sins and have faith that GOD will save us. This saving faith is granted us by GOD at the end of our repentance. This type of faith is believing with all your heart that GOD will do what HE says. GOD has promised that HE will save us when we come to HIM with a broken heart, sorry for our sins, trusting HIM and HIM alone for our salvation. When we reach this point, we will be saved because GOD's promises are true.

GOD's plan is a wonderful plan because not only are we saved but we are assured of a home in heaven throughout all ETERNITY. GOD's salvation is eternal (John 5:24, 6:39-40, 10:27-30; Romans 8:35-39). What a wonderful thought—to live forever with the Lord. GOD offers this salvation to all. It is up to us to seek our soul's salvation or be eternally LOST!

SUMMARY

The plan of salvation is offered to all; is only through Christ; is a gift from GOD; is by grace; is conditional upon repentance and faith; and it is ETERNAL.

Our lesson has given two examples of people who were saved by GOD's grace. The Bible contains many others. We also have the witness of all of the people throughout history who have testified to GOD's saving grace. The pastor, as well as, the members of the church where you attend are living examples that Christ still saves. As the song "Amazing Grace" states, "Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now I'm found, was blind but now I see." Thank GOD for HIS plan of salvation!

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

1. You are in a group of young people at school who are discussing religion and their beliefs. They ask you to explain what you believe. What would you do?
2. You are at church listening to the preacher. The service has been very spiritual. Many of the Christians have given their testimonies to the saving grace of GOD. You suddenly feel that you are lost. You know that you should seek the Lord but something tells you to wait. What would you do? Why should you NOT wait?

CONCLUSION

As we have studied this week, I hope that we see that the people in the Bible faced problems just as we do today. However, none of us have been beaten or put in jail because of what we believe. GOD's plan of salvation was the same for the people we studied as it is for us today. Truly, "there is no new thing under the sun."

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Titus 2:11; Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13
Romans 3:24; Romans 5:15
Romans 6:23; Romans 8:32; Romans 11:6
Psalms 40:1-4; Acts 8:35-37; Acts 9:1-9
Acts 16:31; John 4:1-30; Luke 7:36-50

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