Ages Adult

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 Adults

Written by Brother Dallas Wheet, Brother Ronald Gray,
and Elder Roger Carter

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Editors:
Bro. Bobby Vanderpool and Bro. Dallas Wheat

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

Proofreaders:
Sis. Carol Cole, Sis. Nichole Moore, and Sis. Sheila Thompson

Cover Design:
Bro. Jason Shuffitt

Booklet Design and Layout:
Bro. Joey Hayes

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

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

Searching for satisfaction has been one of man's main goals throughout all ages. When we search for satisfaction, we often don't know what we are looking for. Let us start by looking at the meaning of the word. The definition of satisfaction is to be fully gratified or pleased, to be content and free from doubt, and to supply or make payment in full. When we look at the way people of the world are today, we sometimes wonder if they can be satisfied. People are always looking for something bigger and better. Unfortunately, we often look in the wrong place and way for satisfaction. How much better it would be if we could follow the words of David in Psalms 36: 7-9, "How excellent is

thy loving kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of the wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light."

THE NATURAL SIDE OF LOOKING FOR SATISFACTION

Over the years, things have not changed significantly in man's search for satisfaction. We still look in the same direction as those in the past. In our lesson text, Solomon tells how he looked for gratification and contentment through enjoyment of the world. He could not find it in any worldly pleasures. He couldn't find it in strong drink. We know that Solomon had great riches, including artwork, land and servants, but he still was not satisfied. Even with his great wisdom, he could not find satisfaction as stated in Ecclesiastes 1:18, "For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow."

The search for satisfaction is not associated with any group or class of people. Usually, we might think of the poor and less fortunate as the least satisfied of people. When someone is in this condition, it is so easy to become depressed and downhearted; they believe there is no hope. Yet, are the wealthy and powerful of the world any different? Have we not seen or heard of a rich and powerful person, one who has all the worldly things a person could imagine, become depressed because he is still not content with all he has? We have seen instances how the rich and poor alike have turned to the sins of the world, such as alcohol and drug abuse, to find contentment. Just as the Prodigal Son did, their search is going in the wrong direction. In the 15th chapter of Luke, Jesus tells us in this parable how this man took his inheritance and wasted it on riotous living. He was so poor he was at the point of eating what was thrown to the swine. What a search for satisfaction this man had. It was not until he got to the lowest point in his life that he remembered which way to turn in order to find satisfaction. It states in the 21st verse of the 15th chapter that after his return to his father, he says, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." When he had done this, he found the satisfaction he had been searching for.

THE SPIRITUAL SEARCH FOR SATISFACTION

The search for satisfaction of the soul is seemingly one of the most complicated things man can do. We have seen this debated over the centuries to the extent that battles have been fought. God only knows how many people have given up their lives for this cause. Now, what is satisfaction of the soul? Let's look back at the meaning given earlier in the lesson. Satisfaction means to be fully gratified or pleased. To those of us who have been saved, can we remember how we felt while we were under the convicting hand of the Lord before we were saved? Do you remember the terrible feeling of hopelessness and fear? Yet, when the Lord reached down and removed that heavy burden from your heart, did you not feel as the psalmist who wrote in Psalms 116: 6-7, "I was brought low and he helped me. Return unto thy rest O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with thee." Can you think of a more gratifying or pleasing time in your life than when you were saved?

Now let us look at the next meaning of satisfaction: to be content and free from doubt. In today's world it is very hard not to have second thoughts about the things you do in life. How can we be content and free from doubt when it comes to our faith in the Lord? We must always turn to the Lord and He will help us along the way. Remember Peter walking on the water with Jesus in the 14th chapter of Matthew? As long as he looked to Jesus he could walk on the water, but when he turned and looked at the great waves around him, he began to sink and cried out to Jesus to save him. Then the 31st verse of

continued

that chapter says, "And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst though doubt?" So when we get away from the Lord, we too can cry out to the Lord in prayer to help us through doubt and discontentment and find peace.

The final meaning of satisfaction was to supply or make payment in full. How has payment been made in full to bring us satisfaction? What has God done to give us peace and contentment? John 3: 16-17 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." There is no greater satisfaction than to know that through the price that Jesus paid on that terrible cross to die for our sins, we can have eternal salvation by the repenting of our sins. We also know that God will not stop there. Paul said to the Philippians, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." — Philippians 4:19. If we are willing to obey the Lord and follow his commandments He will continue to bless us also.

CONCLUSION

The search for satisfaction has eluded many because they search with their mind instead of their soul. We need to call on the Lord for our needs just as David, Solomon, the Prodigal Son, Peter, and others did. The Lord will bless us and care for us if we will obey Him in all things. Read Psalms 23. If you have salvation through the saving power of Jesus Christ in your heart, then you can have the same peace and satisfaction as David did when he wrote the psalm.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE

1 Kings 3:5-14; Psalms 116:1-10; Matthew 14:22-33; Luke 15:11-24

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

Discuss Ecclesiastes 1:18

Discuss the difference between wants and needs

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.
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.

continued

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

Never in the history of mankind have God's children been faced with such a variety of sinful diversions that threaten to ruin their Christian witness . The current amoral atmosphere of "anything goes" and the embrace of situational ethics, is reason for discouragement. Each day that the Lord allows us to live we are assailed with temptations. As adults and parents, we are constantly beset with temptations which even now threaten our children.

Are we, as adults, less vulnerable to the wiles of Satan than our children? We most assuredly should be! However, when we look around at God's people and their apparent immaturity pertaining to His teachings and His commandments, it causes us to wonder. How can we show our young people the Godly way to prevail when we plunge headlong into temptations and consistently fail to make choices pleasing to God? Are we attempting to please God or ourselves and other people?

How, then, are we to face the temptations of life? In our lesson, we are given two examples of those who were confronted by enormously sinful enticements, but with very different results. One chose to follow the principles instilled in him by a strong faith in God, while the other chose to go his own way. That choice is most usually the beginning of our downfall.

JOSEPH

Genesis 39:7-21

The thirty-ninth chapter of Genesis centers around the young Hebrew servant Joseph, who had been sold into slavery in Egypt. Despite the circumstances into which he had been placed, he resolved to make the best of the matter. His rise to a position of favor and responsibility in the household of his master, Potipher, had come through the providence of God. Gen 39:2 states, "And the Lord was with Joseph and he was a prosperous man." Potipher made Joseph the overseer of his entire household. With the success and favor that came to Joseph came a severe test of his faithfulness to God who had so richly blessed him. On two separate occasions, Potipher's wife attempted to get Joseph to commit adultery with her (Vs: 7; 10). Joseph, though, was resolutely determined to have no part in such actions. Was Joseph able to escape her cunning attempts by sheer strength of character and ethical uprightness? Many of us would like to credit such actions to our inherent moral soundness wouldn't we? However, Joseph's convictions came from steadfast faith in his God who he could not knowingly offend (v9;"...how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?").

Joseph's refusal to sin against his master, and ultimately against God's commandments, was not to be the end of the story. Seeing that she could not seduce Joseph, Potipher's wife lied and pretended to be the victim of Joseph's unsolicited advances. How typical are her actions. Haven't we all known at one time or another, a situation when slanderous remarks have been made against our brothers and sisters in Christ. Satan and those who do his bidding will stop at nothing to destroy the good name and Christian influence of a devoted believer.

As for Joseph, his situation was bleak for the moment, but his faith in God only grew stronger. Even though Joseph did what was right in the eyes of God, his final state was that of a prisoner. The falsehoods of Potipher's wife had cost him his favored position. God continued to bless him even dur-

ing his period of confinement (v21; "But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison"). While the immediate circumstances may appear insurmountable, we should trust God to lead us to His desired outcomes. (Romans 5:3; "but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulations worketh patience").

God had great future plans for Joseph, but patience and faith would be required on his behalf. These traits, and God's providence, would eventually establish Joseph as one of the most powerful men in Egypt. If we remain faithful to God through trials and temptations - making choices pleasing to Him - who knows what great things may be in store for us in God's work! Every one of us should strive to that end (Titus 3:8 ; This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.")

ACHAN

Joshua 7:20-25

The children of Israel had been punished for their disobedience by wandering in the wilderness for forty years. God led the children of Israel into the promised land when He thought they were spiritually ready. God will suffer no compromise of His will. Such was the case for the triumph in Jericho, the first major obstacle for the people in their taking of Canaan. Specific instruction had been given by God for the eventual destruction of the city. Everything was to be destroyed except the valuable metals which would be placed into the treasury of the Lord. The Lord made it abundantly clear to Joshua and all the people that nothing was to be kept from the spoils of the city when the walls fell. "And ye in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it." (Joshua 6:18)

Achan, a member of the conquering Hebrew army, chose to disobey God. In so doing he brought the anger of God not just on himself and his family, but on the entire nation (Joshua 7:1). The sin of one brought a curse upon all. The only thing that would satisfy God was for the wrongdoer to be sought out and the sin revealed. (Joshua 7:13) When confronted by Joshua, Achan admitted his sin before God and the people. The temptation of a "goodly garment" along with the silver and gold, had caused Achan to disobey God. Even though he had buried these spoils in an attempt to hide them, he could not keep them from God. This fact should be ever before us today as we attempt to hide our sins from our brothers and sisters in Christ. We may succeed in deceiving those of finite knowledge, but we will not deceive God. Achan and his entire family suffered eventual destruction because of his disobedience.

A very real and oppressive truth comes from this example. Many times punishment for sin against God doesn't cease with the offender, but can plague family and friends as well. Until the "sin in the camp" has been made known to all, God may continue to withhold his blessings. Our foremost thought, aside from that of the dishonor to God, should be the long-term consequences of our sins to our church, family members and friends.

As long as time endures, temptations are always going to be before us. It is not a sign of weakness to wonder how we shall be able to make the critical choices necessary for continued blessings from God. What did Joseph do? He asked himself, "how can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9). That is his acknowledgment that he could not expect to receive blessings from God when he had willingly broken God's laws. Should we not be equally honest today?

Despite the clearly defined plan God has given us and would have us follow, man has continued to stumble. While our carnal nature is a major contributor to these spiritual blunders, our unwillingness to seek God's will for our life is a greater cause. The wisdom of Solomon is displayed throughout his writ-

continued

ings. Despite his riches, fame, power and position, Solomon knew that he would be nothing without God and His guidance. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12). Later on in his writings, Solomon stresses this theme again "All the ways of man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the Spirits" (Proverbs 16:2).

CONCLUSION

In times of affliction we must look to God. There is no effort valiant enough if it does not involve our reliance on God. We are such feeble creatures, that the Devil will devour us if we depend upon our own means of resistance. Satan never rests. "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil , as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour" (I Peter 5:8). Satan will use any means to ruin our witness and make us of no effect. He ever lays before us the world and all its pleasures, telling us that it is all there for our enjoyment (James 1:14 and I John 2:15-17).

Where is the strength of the Lord? How can He help us when we come so perilously close to falling prey to Satan? How is the Lord qualified to help us at these trying times? The Lord is qualified to help us because he took upon Himself the flesh of man and overcame Satan and all his temptation. Just as our only hope for eternal salvation is through His shed blood, our only hope for an effective Christian life is through His perfect example." For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor, them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18). "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:15-16).

Temptations can strengthen us or they can corrupt us. God's greatest glory comes when we are able to look to Him in times of adversity and seek His will. Finding His will and being able to withstand the snares of the devil is only possible if we are able to place ourselves completely in His care. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (2 Peter 2:9). And finally, "For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps" (I Peter 2:21).

As God's children, we are marked by Satan and the world. We should accept the challenges they bring upon us as opportunities to show God's way to a lost and perishing world. "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed: but let him glorify God on this behalf" (I Peter 4:16). When we are confronted with choices critical to the spiritual well-being of our church, our families and even our own prosperity, there is no alternative for the steadfast Christian. Asking, "What would Christ do?" is the sign of someone willing to suffer the consequences of Christianity. It would seem to this writer that faith and perseverance may be one of the most distinguishing characteristics of those that are truly God's children.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. With the divorce rate of members in many Missionary Baptist churches comparable to the national average, are we making wise choices in our life mate?
2. If my son or daughter comes to me with plans to marry outside our faith, what advice should I give them? Is this a critical question?
3. If my lost children and grandchildren are attending a church where I know they could be deceived, should I confront them?
4. If my children and grandchildren are involved in sports and other activities that will take them away from church during periods of revival and Bible School, what am I to do?
5. If I am offered a nice promotion at work, but it will take me away from family and church much of the time, should I even consider taking it?
6. If an attractive offer of employment comes my way, but it would involve moving to an area where there are no sound churches, should I accept?

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

Jesus, speaking of Satan in John 8:44, states, "When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar and the father of it." The devil is the enemy of life and truth. By a lie, embedded in ridicule and deceit, Satan brought spiritual and physical death to mankind (Genesis 3). These two modes of perpetrating lies were so effective that they have been used throughout the history of the human family. As we evaluate present day conditions, we see this tandem to be healthy, robust, and effective. The terms deceit and ridicule are broad and encompass many aspects of life. Deceit is the act of causing or the attempt to cause someone to accept as true or valid that which is false. Deceit can be practiced in very subtle manners, often void of spoken words. Ridicule is the deliberate use of sarcasm and belittling to bring about embarrassment and humiliation. Ridicule is a form of persecution.

Daily, we are faced with the task of dealing with ridicule and deceit. Our best guide for this task is God's word. Here we find a discussion of how individual characters responded to ridicule and deceit, as well as a discussion about the effects which they had upon the lives of the characters. Our lesson will deal directly with two very prominent characters, Jacob from the Old Testament and Paul from the New Testament. Both characters used and were recipients of ridicule and deceit. Though we will be considering the lives of Jacob and Paul, remember that Jesus was able to perfectly and completely

continued

deal with ridicule and deceit throughout his life. At no time did he participate in ridicule or deceit. As with many topics, He could be considered as the perfect example.

JACOB

From a natural standpoint, we understand the processes involved in sowing and reaping. When we sow wheat, we expect to reap wheat. We do not go to the harvest with the expectation of gathering grapes. The principle is as true from a spiritual sense as it is from the natural sense. This spiritual law is set forth in Galatians 6:7: "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Jacob, the central character from Genesis 25 through Genesis 35, sets forth the teachings of Galatians 6:7 as well as any character from the Old Testament. Jacob's name even implies deceit, for it means tripper or supplanter. The strife which existed between Jacob and his twin , Esau, is evident in the description of the pregnancy of Rebekah, the wife of Isaac. The Scriptures state that the twins struggled together within her and that at birth Jacob, the younger, came forth clutching the heel of Esau. This struggle was evident throughout the life of Jacob. In Genesis 27 we find an account of the deception perpetrated by Jacob and Rebekah upon Isaac to steal the blessing of Esau. The events which are discussed in this chapter of Genesis followed Jacob for the remainder of his life and even had an effect upon his descendants, the nation of Israel, for hundreds of years. Jacob fled from the face of Esau because he feared for his life. However, Jacob and Rebekah again deceived Isaac in leading him to think that the primary purpose for Jacob's going to Padanaram was to secure a wife from the descendants of Bethuel, the father of Rebekah. We might note at this point that a second act of deception was required in the attempt to avoid the consequences of the first act. The point is, a lie never stands alone; it always requires another to hold it up! This becomes the origin of an unending cycle.

As we investigate Jacob's developing relationship with Rebekah's brother, Laban, and his two daughters, Rachel and Leah, we see the fruits of deceit being harvested. Jacob spent seven years in servitude to Laban for the privilege of taking Rachel as his wife. By some method of deception Laban substituted his older daughter, Leah, for the seven years of service. Jacob was required to serve seven more years for Rachel. Jacob ended this ordeal with two wives and their handmaids. Jacob fathered children of each of the four women. The fruits of deceit are evident in the hostility between the wives and between the children of Jacob. The problems generated by the deceit perpetrated between Laban's household and that of Jacob's became so great that Jacob was willing to face his brother Esau, and possibly death, rather than to stay in Padanaram.

In Genesis 34 we begin to see the fruits of deceit flow over into the lives of Jacob's children. Here Simeon and Levi deceived and inflicted vengeance upon the inhabitants of Hanor's city because of the treatment given their sister, Diana, by Hanor's son. The web of deceit continued in Genesis 38 involving Judah and his son's wife, Tamar. All these events were hurtful to Jacob, but no event had the magnitude of hurt as did the one which involved his favorite son, Joseph.

Genesis 37 tells of the persecution and ridicule focused upon Joseph by his brothers and the deceit they used to explain Joseph's disappearance to Jacob. The hurt inflicted upon Jacob was so intense that he could find no comfort. "And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him." Genesis 37:34,35.

In Mark 4:3-20 we have a record of the parable of the sower as stated by Jesus. Some of the sower's seed fell upon good ground and brought forth a hundredfold. Indeed, it seems to be the case that Jacob sowed some

seeds of deceit on very fertile ground for he spent an entire life reaping the fruits of his deception. Though we have concentrated upon the negative side of Jacob's life, we should not depart without saying that Jacob loved God and he depended upon God for leadership in many instances. God bestowed many blessings on Jacob. The lineage of Abraham passes through Jacob to the nation of Israel and God blessed this nation of people in a mighty way.

THE APOSTLE PAUL

Little is known of the life of Paul from his birth in Tarsus as a Roman citizen until his appearance in Jerusalem as a persecutor of the church. We do know that he was of the tribe of Benjamin, a Pharisee of the strictest sect, educated at the feet of Gamaliel and a member of the Sanhedrian court, Acts 22:3. In light of Paul's education and his early prominence in the Jewish hierarchy, we can assume that his family was prominent and of means. He was a "rising star' in the Jewish culture of the first century. It is easy to visualize the disappointment of the Jewish community resulting from the transformation which occurred to Paul on the Damascus road. Their disappointment surfaced as ridicule and persecution directed at Paul. II Corinthians 11:21-30 gives a partial list of the persecutions that were directed at Paul, primarily by his own Jewish people. Read through this list. We might ask, "What sustained Paul through these persecutions and trials?" First, Paul had an intense love for Christ and for lost humanity. He realized that the things he had been taught to depend upon, before being saved, could not bring an individual into a right relationship with God. He realized that one could not be saved as long as he trusted in his own efforts and accomplishments in life. God gave him a mission; he had a message to deliver to his Jewish family and eventually to the Gentile people. Read Phillipians 3:1-10 Second, Paul realized that the sufferings and trials of this life are incomparable to the persecutions and sufferings that Christ endured to secure our salvation. Read Hebrews 12:1,2. Throughout Paul's writing we find encouragement and admonition for the Christian to persevere. Paul was able to persevere through the Grace of God.

CONCLUSION

From the days of Able and Cane, the ungodly has ridiculed, deceived, and persecuted the righteous. After reading about persecutions of Christians in I Peter 4:12-14, we find that we are not to think it strange to be persecuted for our beliefs, but we are to be happy when we are reproached for the name of Christ. In I Peter 4:19, we find, "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator." Paul expresses this same idea in 2 Timothy 1:12: "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Through temptations, deceit, ridicule, and persecutions that we face in life, we are to persevere and focus our efforts on centering our lives in the will of God. We are to cast our cares upon Him, for He careth for us. Read I Peter 5:6-11.

REFERENCE SCRIPTURES

Phillipians 3:1-10; 2 Corinthians 11:21-30; I Peter 4:12-14, 5:6-11; Genesis 27, 34, 38

DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. List some of the deceptions employed by Jacob.
2. List some forms of deception used upon Jacob.
3. List some of the deceptions involved in the lives of Jacob's children.
4. How was Joseph ridiculed and persecuted by his brothers?
5. List some of the persecutions which occurred in the Apostle Paul's life.
6. How did the Apostle Paul deal with his persecutions?

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

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: 1 John 3:1. Unwavering and constant, God's love has been woven into the fabric of human history from the creation of Adam to the present moment of time. This love is of such intensity that we can not fully comprehend its scope and passion. Often we try to define words and to make substitutions for them. If we attempt to do this with the word "love," we always lose some of the characteristics and feelings which the word imparts to us. More than any other word, whether applied to the human or divine, love expresses best the feelings of a deep, intense, and close interpersonal relationship. In this lesson, we want to investigate the manifestation of God's love in the lives of the unsaved and the saved.

GOD'S LOVE TOWARD THE UNSAVED

The first manifestation of God's love for the unsaved occurred in the Garden of Eden after the fall of Adam. Though Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command concerning the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden, God came searching for them in the cool of the day. God's traversing and calling , "Where art thou?" was an expression of God's love toward them. God knew where Adam and Eve were hiding and He knew what they had done. God came to them not making accusations, but asking questions with the door of repentance open. This same approach by God is evident in dealing with Cain after he murdered his brother, Abel. Both Testaments, The Old and The New, clearly teach that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but desires that all come to repentance. Read Ezekiel 33:11 and 2 Peter 3:9.

Recorded in 1 John 4:8,16 is the statement, "God is love." This statement stresses one of the dominant characteristics of God. The love spoken of by John in these passages was clearly demonstrated in the events which transpired at Calvary when Jesus died for all our sins. This love is the central thought in John 3:16, the focal point of the Scriptures: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The next verse states that He came not to condemn, but to save. How blessed the human family is that God, through His love, has provided a way for sinful man to attain a right relationship with his Holy and Righteous Creator. A way which is not restricted to the rich, the famous, the wise, or to the mighty, but is open to whosoever. It is open to the weak, to the downtrodden, to those who have been rejected by the world system, and by their fellow man with his religious order. I often turn to Isaiah 55:1 and read, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." How this makes my soul rejoice, to think of the time when I had such a thirst and I was able to come to the Lord and He satisfied all my needs!

God's Love is evident in the universal appeal to the human family of Isaiah 55:6,7: "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." This admonition and appeal is as valid today as it was when Isaiah penned the words of God several hundred years before the birth of Christ.

Our lesson text clearly indicates that Christ died for the ungodly, and that the death of Christ was a demonstration of God's love for us. Not only did Christ die for us, but He died in our place. Many are unaware and unconcerned about their relationship to God, not realizing that it is in Him we live, and move, and have our being.

GOD'S LOVE TOWARD THE SAVED

Romans 5:9 tells us that we are justified by the blood of Jesus. This is the same teaching which we find in Ephesians 1:7, 2:13, Colossians 1:14, and Hebrews 9:12-15. Romans 5:10 states that being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. This means the death of Christ and his shed blood effects salvation and the life of Christ sustains salvation. The salvation of a believer is as sure as the resurrection and the life of Christ which now is in the presence of God. What shall separate us from this love? Paul concludes in Romans 8:35-39 that the believer is inseparable from God's love. This is true because His love is set forth in a person who is God Himself, Jesus Christ, our Savior. God's intent to redeem believers can not be destroyed, because His power is infinitely greater than that of any potential enemy. His plan will be implemented because it is his Divine Purpose.

continued

Some believe and teach that "believers can fall from grace." I know of no Scripture which teaches this. However, there are a number of scriptures which teach that God corrects his children through love. Read Hebrews 12:5-11. This same teaching is inherent in Psalms 23 when David says, "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Certainly, if a believer did not have security in Jesus, our lesson scriptures would be contradicted and God's word would be untrue. We know this not to be the case. If the doctrine of eternal security of the believer is voided, we would be left with the task of outmaneuvering and outwitting Satan as we live through this life. God, through His love and wisdom, has left His Word and His Spirit to guide us through this life. We can be thankful that the keeping of our salvation is not left to us, but is secured by the resurrection and present life of our Lord and Savior, Christ Jesus. Unlike man's love, God's love for us is not swayed by passion or diverted from us by disobedience.

CONCLUSION

I suppose that Jeremiah 31:3 describes the nature of God's love as well as any of the Scriptures; it is not new and it is everlasting. This Scripture, along with Romans 2:4, teaches us that the loving-kindness of God draws us into repentance. Without the drawing of the lost by God's love, the lost would never seek after God and all would be eternally separated from Him. Romans 8:32, John 10:10-18, and John 15:13 tell us that "The Cross" is the greatest example of God's love for us.

As individual Christians, the greatest manifestation of God's abiding love in us is demonstrated in brotherly love. This teaching is found in both John 13:35 and 1 Peter 1:22. Love for our fellow Christian is a command which Jesus gives us in John 15:12. If we would follow this command, then we would be in a much better position to conform to the teachings of Phillipians 2:3, "Let each esteem other better than themselves." If we would only do this, how our power and influence would be increased.

Because God loves the entire human family and Christ died for all, it becomes the responsibility of Christians, who reflect God's Love, to carry the Gospel to the entire world. We, collectively and as individual churches, have a responsibility to comply with the commission given in Matthew 28:18-20. Individually, we are to support and encourage our churches in their effort to comply with this commission. This commission is threefold. We are to carry the gospel to all people. Those who are converted are to be baptized, attesting to their identification with Christ and a local congregation of baptized believers. These baptized believers are then to be taught so that they can be effectual in the promotion of God's work. If we comply with the instructions given in the commission, then great is our reward. We have the abiding promise, I AM WITH YOU ALWAY, EVEN UNTO THE END OF THE WORLD.

REFERENCE SCRIPTURES

John 10:10-19, 15:8-14; 1 John 4:7-12; Ephesians 5:1-2; 1 Corinthians 13; and 1 John 2.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. How can a Christian show forth God's love?
2. List some ways in which God has demonstrated His love toward mankind.
3. Discuss the commandment given in 1 John 2.
4. How has God demonstrated His love in your life?
5. Discuss 1 Corinthians 13:13.
6. What can I do to assist my church in fulfilling Matthew 28:18-20.

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.

continued

INTRODUCTION

The plan of salvation is truly not something new. The bible proclaims and directs people toward salvation from Genesis through Revelations. Salvation is and has always been possible to everyone. Romans 10:13 states "For Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Although most of you who have studied this lesson have been saved by the grace of God, could you explain it to one who is lost? We feel one of the best ways to explain salvation to someone is to tell of our own experience of salvation. When we think back to when we were saved, is it really any different from the two examples given in the lesson text? In this lesson, we will try to answer some of the questions a lost sinner might ask concerning God's plan of salvation.

WHAT IS SALVATION?

Jesus states in John3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." In this one much-used verse is the Lord's plan of salvation so completely stated. He tells us that salvation comes not from anything we could do, but is a "gift from God" as stated in Ephesians 2:8. We cannot work it out by any good thing we do, because salvation must come through Jesus Christ. He says in John 10:9, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." In our lesson text the jailer asked Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." This belief is not a belief of the mind but of the soul. The psalmist states in the lesson text when the "sorrows of death compassed me and the pains of hell gat hold upon me, I found trouble and sorrow." This is the convicting power of God that each lost sinner must face before they are saved. The psalmist then goes on to say that he called upon the Lord, "O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul." He didn't say, "Let me be baptized to be saved," or "What good work can I do to be saved?" or, "Through my acceptance of God, I am saved." He realized that there was nothing he could do to bring this about except to call on the name of the Lord for the forgiveness of his sins. It was his belief in the Lord and His saving power that saved him so he could say, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." Just as the psalmist and jailer realized that there was nothing short of calling on the name of the Lord to be saved, the people of the world today must realize there is no good work they can do to be saved. Paul states in Ephesians 2:8-10, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is a gift of God. Not of works lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

It was stated in the previous scriptures that "by grace are ye saved." What does this mean? Here the word "grace" means unmerited favor. Why is it that we had to have unmerited favor to be saved? Paul states in Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." He is telling us that what we may think of as being good by our standards cannot compare to the good that God can do for us. Verse 24 says, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." It was by God's grace, or unmerited favor, that the plan of salvation was given to the world at the cost of God's only begotten son.

WHAT DOES REPENTING OF YOUR SINS MEAN?

The repentance of sins is part of the plan of salvation that is often overlooked by the world today. People would rather be told that to be saved, all they have to do is be baptized, accept Christ, or join the church. This is not what the Lord teaches us in the scriptures. The book of Joel 2:12-13, states, "Therefore also now sayeth the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; And rend your heart not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is

gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil." These verses are telling the Jews that the tearing away of their clothes, which was a physical action they did to show they were in mourning, would not save them, but a spiritual tearing of the heart and soul was needed. John the Baptist confronts the Pharisees and Sadducees after warning the people to "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). They could not rely on being a descendant of Abraham to save them, but they must "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Verse 8). To be able to do this, each must go to the Lord in all humility and faith that He will save us and He will answer our prayers. Psalms 34:18 says, " The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." To those who have been saved, it was the broken heart and contrite spirit in knowing we were lost in our sins that brought us down to the point we could go no further. Yet it was the same faith as the psalmist and jailer had in Jesus Christ that brought us salvation.

WHEN DID THE PLAN OF SALVATION START?

It was stated in the introduction that the plan of salvation began at the beginning with Adam. After the fall of man, the Lord tells the serpent in Genesis 3:15, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." This is the promise of Jesus's coming and, even though with great suffering and pain, he would overcome death and defeat Satan. Read 1Peter 1:18-21. Here Peter tells us that we are not redeemed by worldly things, but by the blood of Jesus Christ, "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world" (Verse 20).

IS SALVATION ETERNAL?

What does eternal mean? Eternal means non-ending or everlasting. Can we then have an everlasting plan of salvation? Read again John 3:16. Jesus states that if we believe in him we can have everlasting life. Again in John 6:40 Jesus says, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life." Throughout the scriptures they tell us that all we need for eternal life is to call upon the Lord to save us just as the psalmist, jailer, Saul, and others have done. Read Romans 8:35-39. Paul tells us nothing can "separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

CONCLUSION

The plan of salvation, the promise of eternal life with the Lord for all who will seek Him and believe on Him, is the most important thing anyone can have in their life. The Lord has made a way for all who seek Him for salvation and He wants every man, woman, boy, and girl to be saved. Yet He also says there will come a day when Jesus shall call His children home. The ones who have been saved shall live in paradise with the Lord, but the lost will live in eternal torments with the devil.

If the Lord has saved you, work for Him. Testify to a lost and dying world about what God has done for you, with the hope that others will be saved. If you are lost in your sins, seek the Lord while you still have time.

OTHER SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Conversion of Saul, Acts 9: 1-9

The Woman at the well, John 4: 1-30.

Phillip and the Eunuch, Acts 8: 26-39.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

Discuss the "fruits meet for repentance" that you brought forth to be baptized.

Read Genesis 4:5-7. What is God trying to tell Cain?

Discuss the meaning of Revelation 22:20.

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