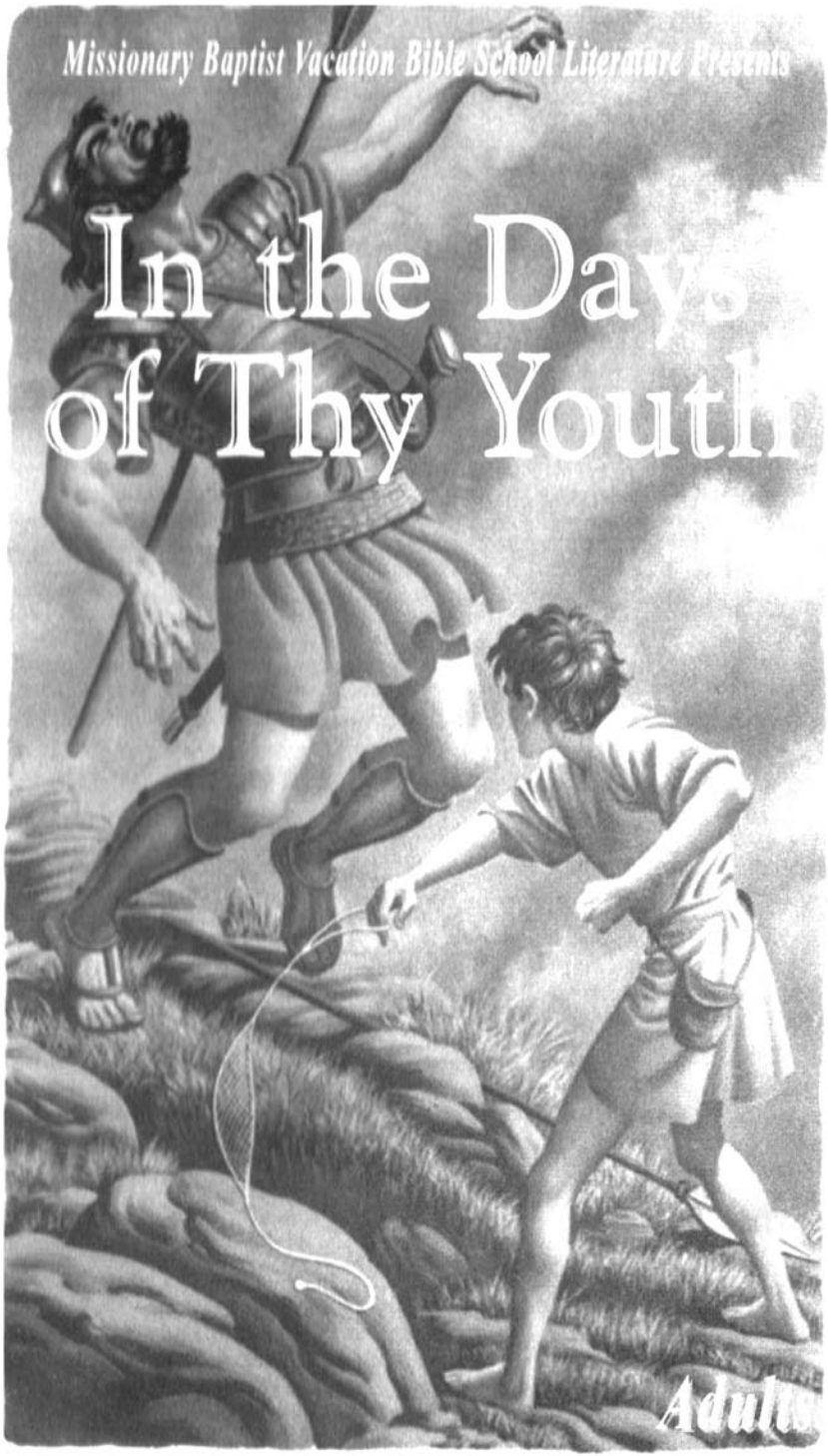
Missionary Baptist Vacation Bible School Literature Presents
In the Days
of Thy Youth
Adult

The Missionary Baptist
Vacation Bible School Literature Committee presents

"In the Days of Thy Youth"

Vacation Bible School Lessons for Adults

Written by Brother Clifford Hayes, Elder Ron Spurgeon, Elder Roger Carter, Brother Ron Gray, and Brother Jimmy Claiborne

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LESSON 1

REMEMBER NOW THY CREATOR

LESSON TEXT
ECC. 11:7-10, 12:1

WRITTEN BY
CLIFFORD HAYES

ECCLESIASTES 11:

7. Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun:
8. But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity.
9. Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.
10. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity.

12:1 Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;

INTRODUCTION

The overall theme for this year's study is "In the days of thy youth." The lesson today deals with the importance of finding Jesus as our savior at an early age and establishing a pattern for our future service in God's kingdom. Lessons later in the week will demonstrate some of the various paths our lives will take in the development of our stewardship. While these lessons are targeted primarily toward the young people, the older person who has been saved should realize that it is never too late to serve God. Just as now is the time of salvation, now is also the time for service to God.

DAVID

In many ways we can relate to David's life because it serves as a wonderful example of so many things that touch our lives. At the time that Goliath was mocking and insulting the army of Israel, the boy shepherd volunteered to fight the giant. King Saul told David that he was too young to face a warrior such as Goliath in battle. Saul made the same mistake that Samuel made when he was to anoint one of Jesse's sons as the new King of Israel. When Samuel would have anointed Eliab, God spoke, "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart. 1 Samuel 16:7. Samuel and Saul could not see what was in David's heart, but God could.

David answered Saul, "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." 1 Samuel 17:37. David had three qualities that were essential for him to defeat Goliath: (1) A right state of heart toward God, (2) the dis-

cipline of preparation and training, and (3) dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit. (B.H. Carroll) All three of these qualities are evidenced in his conversation with Saul. (Verse 34-37) He knew the Lord and placed his reliance on Him. In his experience as a shepherd he had developed skills that enabled him to kill the giant.

Let us remember that, for David, all of his preparation began at an earlier age when he cried out to God for the salvation of his soul. Psalms 40:1-4 and 116:1-9 affords us a word picture of David's travel from a lost sinner to a born again child of God. Read these verses. In them you will find phrases that are very familiar to any of you who have been saved by God's grace

JOB'S EXAMPLE

Our lives are short and the opportunities to truly serve God are severely limited by the constraint of time unless we have laid the foundation for that service early. The brevity of life is best expressed by Job, " Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass; " Job 14:1-2; 5. Here we have proof from God's holy word that the life span of man is brief. The days of his life are under the control of his Creator. When a man is in his youth, he is as a flower, vigorous and strong. Even though his blossoms show regenerative and reproductive powers, he will go as all things living. He will die and it will be shown that of himself, his substance is as a shadow.

Because he knew that his lifespan was brief and his lot in life was now desperate due to his losses and his physical afflictions, Job was looking forward to the time when God would call him into eternity. In Job 14:14, the patient one asks, " If a man die, shall he live again? Job asks this in despair, realizing that he had no hope of recovering his former way of life. He only wants to hide in the grave until this wrath of God is past. Later in the same book Job answers the question in this manner, "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Job 19:25-26. All of the above concerning Job was said that the following could be stated: the faith that Job exhibited was not a recent thing. Before his afflictions came upon him God had blessed him with much material wealth and a wonderful family. The first verse of the book states that Job was an upright and righteous man. God Himself further testifies to this in the eighth verse. Knowing what we know of other teachings in the bible, we conclude that Job's faith and righteousness were the result of a pattern of worship established early in life.

JOSIAH

We read in 2 Chronicles 34 that Josiah became King of Judah when he was eight years old. The bible testifies as to his character, " He did that which was right in the sight of the

Lord, and walked in the ways of David his father, and declined neither to the right hand or to the left." The throne of his father and grandfather, Amon and Manasseh, was characterized by the worship of idols, even to the extent that Manasseh placed an idol in the temple that Solomon built. As the years of his reign continued Josiah did many things to bring Judah back to Jehovah worship. Josiah cleaned out all the places of idol worship and rid the country of the abominations and licentiousness of the two former kings.

During the almost sixty years reign of Manasseh and Amon the temple had come to a bad state of repair. Josiah sent workers to repair the damage and while doing the repairs they found the book of the law. When Josiah heard the law read he tore his clothes, cried and repented that Judah had strayed so far from the worship that had been prescribed to Moses by God. The king called the elders of Judah together and re-instituted temple worship and caused the nation to once again observe the Passover.

For the purposes of this lesson we must look at 2 Chronicles 34:3. "For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father:". His example fits perfectly with the last verse of the lesson text, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;" . While he was still young and tender he sought after God and obviously found Him to the salvation of his soul, else he would not have ruled Judah as he did.

Contrast his life and kingdom to that of his grandfather Manasseh. One would think that the son of the good King Hezekiah would also be a follower of God. But such was not the case. After years of excesses and idol worship, Manasseh was taken captive by the king of Assyria. While in captivity he repented and asked God's mercy. God heard his prayers and brought him back to Jerusalem, where Manasseh tried to rectify the damage that he had done in the early part of his reign. But in large part it was too late. The people sacrificed to the Lord God, but they did it in the high places. If the works of Hezekiah had been continued, the judgments of Deuteronomy 27-28 would not have been placed on the nation of Judah. Plainly, Manasseh did not remember his creator in the days of his youth.

CONCLUSION

With God in our lives we can be productive in His service. Experiencing salvation will enrich our lives, but the lives of others will also be improved through our testimonies, teachings and the examples we set for them. In order for anyone to realize stewardship to its fullness, a commitment to service must be made as early in life as possible. This commitment must be preceded by the individual seeking God for the salvation of his soul.

All of us have known people who have been saved and joined the church but have never really taken hold in the Lord's work. Churches and mature Christians should encourage these casual church members to begin to fulfill their obligations and responsibilities to God and the church. Even

though they may have been saved a number of years, if they have not begun to grow in the Lord they are still as much babes in Christ as the new convert. This years unconcerned member could develop into next year's mighty soul winning warrior for God.

LESSON 2

RECEIVING INSTRUCTION

LESSON TEXT
II TIMOTHY 3:14-15

WRITTEN BY
RON SPURGEON

II Timothy 3:

14. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;
15. And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

Instructions come in many forms. Products we purchase such as a bicycle, any toy, furniture and many other items usually come with the manufacturer's directions on how to assemble the product. Textbooks, schools, the workplace, society, and church provide instructions. The list of sources of instruction is nearly infinite. The most important training given is from the Word of God, and is especially important during those formative years with our parents.

To receive instructions is to be informed of the directions, to be educated and trained on a subject. How well a person receives the information is determined by how he applies his recognition of the desired outcome. In our lesson we will try to understand how we may better utilize the instructions we receive by recognizing God's Spirit and wisdom as He speaks to us and follow the instructions to God's satisfaction.

RECOGNITION OF GOD'S SPIRIT

Let it be understood that the teaching of recognizing God's Spirit should begin at an early age. The wise man Solomon says to, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Proverbs 22:6. At what age should this begin? As early as possible - NOW! Solomon says to, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;" Ecclesiastes 12:1. The emphasis on "NOW", because it is never too early or too late to begin recognizing the Spirit of God.

God knows us from our mother's womb as stated in, Jeremiah 1:5 "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Jeremiah felt that he was too young to speak for God, but God reaffirmed to him - and others throughout the Bible - that if He sends you, you should not be afraid because He will give you the words to say. Read Jeremiah, Chapter 1 verses 4 - 10 for a better understanding.

Timothy, whose father was a Greek, was taught by his mother and grandmother who were Jews that believed (Acts 16:1; II Timothy 1:5). The teachings that Lois (his grandmother) and Eunice (his mother) taught Timothy made him wise unto salvation by faith

in the Lord Jesus Christ. (II Timothy 3:15). The teaching of these godly women helped Timothy at a young age to recognize the teachings of God's Spirit and wisdom, and thus apply it to his life. Wisdom comes from God when people at any age, being accountable, seek to know it. (Proverbs 1:1-7) There is enough evidence in the scriptures to prove that Timothy recognized God's Spirit when it reproved him of his sin and he surrendered to it for salvation.

In order to recognize the Spirit or wisdom of God one must be saved by grace! Upon receiving the Lord Jesus Christ in his heart, a saved person must study the word of God to grow in wisdom and understanding. "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding." Proverbs 4:7. Refer back to II Timothy 3:15, as well.

THE GIVER AND RECIEVER - COMMUNICATION WITH GOD

What is the Spirit of God telling me? How can I discern the truth via the spirit? Or what is the spirit to me? These are all common questions that young Christian converts ask or wonder about. Understanding how to communicate with God is a very important factor when receiving instruction. Communication with God is prayer and meditation.

Communication is two-directional. A giver (God) and a receiver (saved person) in most prayers are transmitting information to each other through the Holy Spirit. Please let it be understood that we offer a given type of communication, but because of God's infinite foreknowledge, He already knows what we ask before we ask it! Romans 8:26, 27 states, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." We must recognize that the Spirit is the two-directional means by which a person communicates with God.

The Holy Scriptures will be in harmony with what God communicates to His children. This is very important to discern the truth. Until a person experiences "TRUTH" in his heart, the two way communication is one-directional from God (the giver) to the unsaved person (The receiver) who must accept the call or reject it. They that worship the Spirit must worship Him in Spirit and Truth. (John 4:24). If you do not have a two-directional communication line with God, seek Him now for He is waiting for you to answer His call. If you do know about this two-directional communication, don't delay calling the Father daily. He is waiting for your call twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

WHO CAN TEACH?

Saved people have the means to teach or witness of God's goodness through life experiences and knowledge gained from those who have shared instructions and passed it on. God has chosen the saved to be a witness and teacher of His Word. Isaiah

43:10 states, "Ye are my witness, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen; that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me". It is important for Christians to let their light shine. First, it behooves us to let God have honor and glory. Secondly, witnessing is a form of instruction that allows unsaved people the opportunity to learn about Christ. For many people, a saved person may be the only Bible they see.

LESSON 3

RESISTING TEMPTATION

LESSON TEXT
JAMES 1:12-16

WRITTEN BY
ROGER CARTER

James 1:

12. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.
13. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:
14. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.
15. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.
16. Do not err, my beloved brethren.

INTRODUCTION

Resisting temptation is a situation that each of us must face daily. With the world in the immoral shape it is in, sin seems to be lurking everywhere. Unaware to some of us, sin has even crept into the home. Along with the many modern marvels we have in our homes today, comes the opportunity for such things as pornography as well as anything else imaginable to enter. Unfortunately it is not only available to adults, but to children also.

We must realize that it is our duty to God to resist temptation. Paul writes "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Romans 6:13). With this year's theme being "In the Days of Thy Youth", we need to reflect on resisting temptation not only for our (or the adult) sake, but also for the young people.

WHAT IS TEMPTATION?

Temptation is the desire for that which is forbidden. We need to realize temptation is of the devil and not of God. The thirteenth verse of our lesson text lets us know that God can't be tempted with evil nor does He tempt anyone. The devil is described as subtil. Subtil means crafty and cunning. He will use all things in his power to tempt us. We must turn away from the devil and temptation. The only way we can do this is with God's help. Peter writes, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations" (2Peter 2:9).

Temptation has been in the world almost from the beginning. We don't have to read very far in Genesis until we see where Eve was tempted by the devil (chapter 3). Temptation did not end with Eve, but just began. The devil and his angels have not stopped tempting people since then. Peter describes the devil as "a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1Peter 5:8).

There are many examples in the bible about people being tempted. Even Jesus was tempted. As we know, Jesus completely resisted the temptations of the devil and so did many others. People like each of us daily learn to resist temptation. Adults and young people alike overcome temptations. We have examples where it proves we can overcome temptation. These examples can show us how to help ourselves, our children, grandchildren, children in Sunday school and Bible school, and others resist temptation.

LOSING TO TEMPTATION

The trials of temptation we face in our life are common throughout the world and have not changed over the years. They might go by a different name, but in general they are the same. We are tempted by the desires of our flesh. Things that may seem okay to us can be displeasing to God. The devil has a way of making bad things look good. He can twist our thinking around so much that we become blinded to the will of the Lord and think everything is okay to "just do it".

We need to learn lessons from people who have succumbed to the desire for things that God warned them against in the past. People such as Eve and the desire for wisdom (Genesis Chapter 3), Achan and the desire for riches (Joshua Chapter 7), and Lot and the desire for prosperity (Genesis Chapter 13) are good examples how the devil can tempt people to the point where they will disobey God.

The desire for immoral behavior is not something that has just happened lately. King Solomon, a man of great wisdom, even fell to the desires of fleshly lust. He had a great desire for many women. Because of this desire, he turned to worshipping idol gods. When he would not give up the other gods the Lord said his kingdom would be taken away from his son (1Kings 11:1-12).

If we listen to God, He will let us know when something is wrong and will help us resist its temptation. Being a carnal person though, we sometimes want to do what seems right in the eyes of the world instead of following God's command. King Saul is a good example of this. God commanded Saul to destroy the Amalekites. He was to spare no one - not a man, woman, or child. Nor was he to spare any of their animals or any of their possessions. Saul fought the Amelekites and defeated them, but did not destroy them. He did not kill their king and brought the best of their sheep and oxen back to use as a sacrifice to God.

King Saul thought he was doing a good thing in the sight of God even though he didn't obey God. This prideful temptation in what he thought he had accomplished ended with God rejecting Saul and taking the kingdom of Israel away from him (1Samuel Chapter 15). In our own mind we might be able to justify following temptation, but are we ready to pay the consequences for not being obedient to God?

We should teach our children that they need to follow God and listen to

Him in all things. Proverbs 22:6 says "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it". Though there may be times when it seems that a child has turned away from all training, deep down, he will remember what he has learned. So we should never give up hope on this "younger generation", but with love "teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you"(Matthew 28:20).

OVERCOMING TEMPTATION

Temptation, as stated earlier, has been around since the first man and woman. Being tempted is not something uncommon and it can affect everyone. To overcome temptation you must recognize it for what it is and where it is coming from. The lesson text states that temptation is being drawn away by our own lust. The devil is the one who does the drawing and the result is sin. To win over the devil we must look to God for help. We are promised that God will help us in the fight. Paul writes, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1Corinthians 10:13). God will be there to help us in the time of our needs. We just need to look to Him.

We have been given wonderful examples to follow. Today we are tempted to just "follow the crowd" and it's okay because "everybody else does it". While these excuses do not make it right, it does make it justifiable in one's own mind. Too many times we worry more at how we look to other people than how we look to God. We need to always remember to put God first and everything else behind Him.

Daniel is a good example to look at as to how we should obey God and not worry because everyone else is doing it. In the first chapter of Daniel we read how he and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego found favor in the eyes of the king of Babylon. The king even made sure they would be fed with the same meat and wine that he ate. Though others did as the king wished, these four did not want to partake of the food and wine. For some reason they did not want the food and wine, possibly it was offered up to idols first. It states that Daniel did not want to defile himself, so he made a deal with the prince of the eunuchs. For ten days they would not eat the king's food but would eat pulse, which is a vegetable similar to beans, and drink water. After the ten days the prince of the eunuchs would compare them to the ones who ate the kings food.

At the end of the ten days, Daniel and the other three "countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat"(Daniel 1:15). Do we go against the wishes of God because others do it? The answer is no. Will we be blessed if we follow God? The answer is yes. Overcoming temptation is a blessing from God.

Solomon said "My son, if sinners

entice thee, consent thou not" (Proverbs 1:10). The world today has become a decadent and immoral place to live. Immorality has become commonplace. People hardly will shake their head at it, let alone condemn it. Unfortunately, it is readily available to our young people too. We must always be ready to advise and protect them to the best of our ability.

Joseph, the son of Jacob, is a good example we can use to teach our young people that resisting immoral temptations is the right thing to do. After Joseph was sold into slavery, he was bought and became the servant of the captain of the guard for Pharaoh. Joseph became the captain's most trusted servant. The captain's wife began to desire Joseph, but he refused her advances. She was so upset by his refusal that she told her husband that Joseph had made the advances toward her. Because of her lies Joseph was thrown into prison. Although he was put in prison for something he had not done he did not suffer. God "shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison". The keeper of the prison gave Joseph control of the prison under him and God made them prosper (Genesis Chapter 39).

We are not only to have our spirit be obedient to God, but our bodies also. Paul writes "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1). A person can't please God and live an immoral life. We need to look to Jesus, the greatest example of overcoming temptation, for help. He will show the way to all who will ask.

CONCLUSION

Resisting temptation is not easy; people have been trying to resist it throughout the ages. While we sometimes overcome temptation, too many times we don't. Why is this? The reason is simple. We try to overcome it by ourselves and not by the help of God. James says, "Submit yourselves therefore unto God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you" (James 4:7&8).

God has given us examples to learn from, and encouraging words to live by. He has given us armor for our fight against the devil. Read Ephesians 6:11-18. Here we find whom our struggle is with, what we are fighting against, and what we must use in this fight. If the temptation seems too much to bear, remember Jesus said, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23).

LESSON 4

REMAINING FAITHFUL

LESSON TEXT
Daniel 1:8-20

WRITTEN BY
RON GRAY

Daniel 1:

8. But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.
9. Now God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.
10. And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? Then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king.
11. Then said Daniel to Mel'-zar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,
12. Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.
13. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.
14. So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.
15. And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.
16. Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink: and gave them pulse.
17. As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.
18. Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.
19. And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king.
20. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.

INTRODUCTION

No other subject in the realm of religious studies has been more discussed than faith. The word is simple, yet highly complex in its implications. Over time the development of such a vast number of religious denominations has given rise to confusing, and conflicting ideas pertaining to faith and the faithful.
What is faith? How are we to live faithfully? The American College dictionary defines these two words

as follows:

Faith - that trust in God and in His promises as made through Christ, by which man is justified and saved.

Faithful - suggests firmness and steadfastness; a long continued fidelity to whatever one is bound to by pledge, duty or obligation.

Before we can live faithfully, we must define the object of our faithfulness. We can be faithful to our country, our leaders and our ideals. Faithfulness to great and just causes occupies the time of philanthropists. No greater faithfulness can be exhibited than that of a man and woman when they have been joined in marriage. They pledge, by vows exchanged before God, to remain faithful for the remainder of their lives.

Remaining faithful to God requires that we first know God. Knowledge of God is possible, and only so, when we have experienced salvation. We are a "new creature" (2Cor 5:17) and are then duty bound to live for God daily. God's leadership should be so apparent in our lives that every action and reaction reveals His faithful servant. While such a dutiful life is not easy, it is commanded by God. (1Cor 16:13-14)

Our background study and lesson text describe a circumstance of trial for a previously faithful individual. The account of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah is one of considerable inspiration. After the fall of Judah, Daniel and his friends were taken from their homeland by the Babylonians. King Nebuchadnezzar chose these young men to serve him because of their apparent education and intellectual capacity. Many were from well-to-do families and the King recognized their potential.

During their captivity, they were given a formal Babylonian education and training in all matters of the King's court. As part of their training, they were to be served a rigorous diet approved by King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel knew that to partake of the King's table would be against the strict dietary laws of Israel. Immediately, Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself. (v.8)

Every facet of their regimen would be overseen by the King's master of eunuchs, Ashpenaz. Approaching Melzar whom Ashpenaz had set over the Hebrew children, Daniel inquired if they could refrain from eating the King's provisions. God knew well the heart of Daniel and had allowed him to gain favor with Ashpenaz. (v.9) Despite his fear of the king, Melzar agreed to "prove" the young Hebrews for ten days. During this period they would eat a diet of vegetables, primarily beans and water. (v.12) At the end of the ten day period they would be compared to those who ate the king's diet.

God blessed the young men with great skills and wisdom. Even when brought before the king, they were found to be superior to all others in the entire country. (vs. 17-19) Daniel and his comrades demonstrated their superiority to the others physically and mentally. (v.14) Nebuchadnezzar realized the immense talents of Daniel and the others and entrusted great responsi-

bility to them. (v.20)

At this point we view Daniel from a new and solemn perspective. It would have been very easy for these captive young men to partake of the king's food and wine. They were far from home and had little hope of returning. Why not eat the finest foods the king could provide for them? If he chose to dine as the king commanded, he would blatantly disobey God's commandment. Daniel knew, however, that even in this place hundreds of miles from home that God was as close as ever before. His determination to remain faithful was rewarded by God.

Our greatest challenge after being saved is to put on the new man and live after the manner of Christ. Remaining faithful is not an easy task. We are trying to live Godly lives with minds and bodies that are yet imperfect. Many trials test our faith and obstacles block our path. How we react to these will be the mark by which we are judged by God. We will be found firm and steadfast, or weak and unfaithful. It is our duty and obligation to remain faithful to God despite difficult times. We are indebted to Him and must "purpose" in our hearts that we shall not disobey Him and "defile" ourselves.

1. In what ways are we persecuted today as children of God?
2. Can a child of God remain faithful outside the church? How do we explain our members' failure to endure in serving God?
3. How old was Daniel at this time? Can a "young" child of God be strong and faithful?
4. Discuss the blessings of a child of God who has persevered through periods of persecution and temptation? What are the rewards of his endurance?
5. When we are tried and remain faithful, will we face such circumstances later? What are the implications of Daniel 3:8-27 and Daniel 6:1-28?
6. Discuss II Timothy 4:7

Memory Verse: Daniel 1:8

But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank:

LESSON 5

TAKING UP THE CAUSE

LESSON TEXT
ESTHER 4:10-14

WRITTEN BY
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Esther 4:

10. Again Esther spake unto Hatach, and gave him commandment unto Mordecai;
11. All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days.
12. And they told to Mordecai Esther's words.
13. Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews.
14. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

INTRODUCTION

It is important for us to realize that everything the Lord impresses on us to do has a purpose. Some things that he needs done may not seem important to us, but the impression of the Holy Spirit is extremely important. The bible tells us to try the spirits to see if they are from God. We should try the spirits by the word of God. The Lord knows exactly what we need to do every day of our life. He knows the effects of everything requested of us. He also knows the consequences of our failures.

Our dedication to the Lord's work puts us in a position to lose something - our involvement in the world. The world will use up our most precious resource, time. We must give our time to the cause. Let us always remember that the eternal destination of lost souls is our cause. We as children of God must give our time to the Lord's work and take up the cause.

BACKGROUND

From Esther 2:1-8 we learn that Esther was a fair and beautiful young Jewish woman who had lost her mother and father. Mordecai, her cousin, had brought her up as his own daughter. Per the decree of Ahasuerus the king of Persia, Esther went to the king's house in Shushan. Hegai, the keeper of the women, placed her among the maidens from whom the king would chose a wife. Mordecai commanded Esther to not reveal that she was a Jewess (v. 10).

From Esther 2:9-18 we know that

Esther pleased Hegai and won his kindness. He quickly gave Esther and her maids the things for her purification. He also moved them into the best part of the women's house. Twelve months later, Esther was taken before the king. King Ahasuerus loved Esther above all the women and crowned her queen.

Even though God raised Esther to the position of queen, she did not forsake the law of God: Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. (Ex 20:12) "Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise." (Eph. 6:2). She continued to honor the commandment of Mordecai and God kept his promise.

From Esther 2:21-23 we see that Mordecai learned of a plot against King Ahasuerus and informed Esther. "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life." (Pr. 31:10-12). Esther truly did her husband, King Ahasuerus, good and not evil by informing him of the plot; the king's life was saved.

HAMAN'S PLAN

King Ahasuerus promoted a man named Haman above all the princes and commanded that the people bow and reverence him. Mordecai refused to bow and Haman became very angry with Mordecai and all the Jews. He devised a plan to destroy all the Jews and received the King's approval for the plan. "The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich hath many friends. He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he. Do they not err that devise evil? but mercy and truth shall be to them that devise good." (Pr. 14:20-22)

GOD'S PROMISE OPPOSES HAMAN'S PLAN

God could not allow Haman to destroy the Jews. He had promised in Jeremiah 29:10 that the Jews would return from their captivity. They could not "return to this place" if they were destroyed. "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:" (Heb. 6:18). God cannot lie. If he has said something, it will happen. We, as God's children, can always place our hope in God's promises.

ESTHER IS GOD'S MEANS TO DELIVERANCE

God chose a virtuous woman to fulfill a coming need of his people. Esther was exalted to queen to have access to the King. Her nationality was kept secret for her protection until the day that God had a job for her to do. Mordecai sent word to Esther concerning her duty, saying "who knoweth whether thou are

come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" We should be humbled anytime God uses us to accomplish his will. We should always follow the direction given us by the Holy Spirit of God. Who knows if we have been allowed to live another day because of the cause of God?

ESTHER MUST TAKE UP THE CAUSE OR PERISH

From verse 14 of our reading lesson we know that Mordecai warned Esther that she would not escape destruction if she held her peace. In addition, Mordecai warned her that her family would not escape. Esther had to take up the cause or suffer the consequences. We as God's people are in the same situation today. If we do not take up the cause, our family may not receive mercy. Working for God will not win our family's salvation, but not working for him may seal their condition. They must hear the gospel, repent of their sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. If we do not communicate the gospel to them, the wrath of God will pour out on them in eternity.

GOD'S PEOPLE WILL BE SPARED

Mordecai informed Esther that God would deliver the Jews. He told her that deliverance would arise from another place if she held her peace. God' s children need to realize that lost souls around us need deliverance. We must provide them with the gospel for it is the power of God unto salvation. If we hold our peace, can anyone tell if God will provide another source for the gospel' s deliverance to the lost? God has made us a promise. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." (Matt 28:19,20) We are to disciple all nations. We disciple them by preaching the gospel to them. The Lord convicts them and they must seek him until they find Him. We must baptize the saved with scriptural baptism. Requirements for scriptural baptism are proper candidate, proper authority, proper administrator, and proper mode. Then we must teach them the doctrine of our Lord. If we do these three things, we have a promise from God that he will be with us until the end of the world.

ESTHER TAKES UP THE CAUSE WITH A STEP OF FAITH

Esther heeded the warning of Mordecai and requested prayer for herself. She determined to present herself before the king, and knew that her life was in jeopardy. "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it." (Mark 8:35) The true measure of our life will come at the judgment. If our works stand, we shall receive a reward and our time on this earth will not have

been lost. If our works burn, we wasted our time on cares of this earth. Esther determined to take a step of faith. "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith." (Hab. 2:4) We follow the Lord with few consequences today. Esther will live or die here based on the Lord. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13) Esther was in a position to lay down her life for the Jewish nation. We may never reach the point of physical death because of following the Lord, but we should give our time to the Lord. "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small." (Pr. 24:10) Esther did not faint; she took a huge step of faith. "A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;" (Eccl. 3:7). Esther's time of silence ended. She spoke to the king at a time pleasing to the Lord and the Lord used Esther for His honor and glory. God accomplishes his will at a time when he gets honor and glory. God heard and answered the prayers of His children on Esther's behalf; Esther presented herself before the king and he held out his golden scepter, sparing her life.

GOD SPARES BOTH ESTHER AND THE JEWS

Esther asked the king to have a banquet at which she would have a request for the king. The king could not sleep on the night before the banquet. He called for the book of the chronicles to be read to him. The section read was the account of Mordecai saving the king. God brought the dedication of Mordecai to the attention of the king, and the king determined to give Mordecai honor and dignity. God hit Haman's plan to destroy the Jews a fatal blow when Esther informed the King of the plan. The King became very angry with Haman and ordered that he be hanged on the gallows he had had built to hang Mordecai.

Esther requested that the king reverse the plan of Haman to destroy the Jews. The king gave Mordecai the authority to reverse the order and to destroy all the people that had determined to assault the Jews. God's power was shown to both the Jews and the Gentiles. The enemies of the Jews were defeated.

CONCLUSION

God will keep all his promises. If we study the word of God, we can determine the will of God. In addition, we can know the promises delivered unto us. "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." (Rom 9:17). God will get honor and glory. If we follow the Holy Spirit, then God will receive honor and glory from each of us. We should be careful to determine if the spirit that we are following is of God. We should always try the spirits by the word of God. Each of God' s children has a calling to service. We should examine the

promises and requirements of each of these callings as we take up the cause. We will only bring honor and glory to God if we follow his requirements for each of our callings. Stepping out of bounds will only bring reproach to the Lord and to us. Always remember our number one cause is the spreading of the gospel to a lost and dying world. We must take up the cause.