Missionary Baptist
Vacation Bible School Literature
Presents:

Pearls of Great Price

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. **- Matthew 13:45-46**

Adult

The Missionary Baptist
Vacation Bible School Literature Committee presents

Pearls of Great Price

Vacation Bible School Lessons for ADULT
Written by Brother Clifford Hayes, Elder Roger Carter,
Elder Danny Holland, Elder Mitch Glasscock,
Elder Brad Wheeler, and Elder Jerry Miller

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INTRODUCTION TO THIS YEAR'S STUDY
(Written by Clifford Hayes)

As man passes through his years on earth, he strives to attain many things. Beginning with childhood, some become leaders, and this position usually continues throughout life. Others are content to be followers of those leaders, and this trait also continues into adult life. Once the adult years are reached, man will continue to seek after whatever this world has to offer. And once those sought-after wants have been attained, man focuses on other goals. In short, men are rarely satisfied with what they have. There seems to be something within them that drives them to attain more and more. There seems to be something within a few that drives them to be the best they can be in their chosen fields. There is a need for success in everyone.

This need for success is perhaps the most abundant of all the desires that drive the lives of men. What men want may never be defined completely, but at the center of each person's desires, success is one thing that every person longs for. For most people, success is the sole source of self-assurance. Most everyone wishes to be successful in whatever they choose to do in life. I heard a woman say that all she ever wanted to be was a wife and mother. This is a noble ambition. But whatever their aspiration, their desire is to be the best they can be.

The main theme of these lessons is "Pearls of Great Price," and is taken from the parable taught by our Lord in Matthew 13: 45-46. "*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, when seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.*" Actually, the merchant may have been unaware that such a great pearl existed. In the process of examining other pearls, he may have caught rumor of it or he may have discovered it on his own. Seekers after the Truth may have often gone through the process of examining a number of religions, philosophies and ideas. And indeed, the scriptures recognize those who are skeptical, carefully evaluating the ideas proposed, rather than accepting them gullibly with blind faith (Acts 17:11). But once the existence of this "Pearl of Great Price" was made known to the merchant, he purposely sought the treasure, making it his profession and purpose in life. Such an attitude is characteristic of saving faith as the author of Hebrews states in Hebrews 11:6.

There is no way that all of man's wants can be discussed in this series of short lessons. The committee considered many subjects for this series of lessons. It was decided that the things that man desired could be summarized under the main subject headings of wealth, health, wisdom, freedom and peace and love. It was also acknowledged that even if those five objectives were reached in secular aspects of life, man would have achieved a hollow victory if he neglected to attend to the spiritual aspects of his life as well.

LESSON ONE

WEALTH

LESSON TEXT
MATT. 6:19-21

WRITTEN BY
ELDER ROGER CARTER

19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

INTRODUCTION

According to Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, wealth is defined as "larger possessions, collectivity; an abundance of things desired, especially of a worldly estate; affluence; rich." The word that strikes me the most is worldly. In today's world, most people, including those who are Christians, will consider wealth in a worldly way. For those of us who have been saved by God's grace, we have a greater wealth. It is a spiritual wealth. In this lesson we will examine both sides with a hope that it will make us consider the impact each has on our lives and those around us.

WORLDLY WEALTH

Money and the things that money can buy are what make up worldly wealth. The financial world will tell you we can't live without money, and the more a person has, the happier he will be. This is not new thinking because mankind has strived for wealth throughout the ages. People strive to acquire wealth in many different ways, some honest and some dishonest. Too often, it becomes an obsession to them. Unfortunately, as with most obsessions, a person is not satisfied with what he has or willing to give any of it up. We read of such a person in Matthew 19:16-24. This is the account of the rich young ruler who came to Jesus and asked Him how he could attain eternal life. Jesus told him to obey the commandments, and he replied that he had done that from his youth. But when Jesus told him to go sell all he had and give it to the poor, the rich man was not willing to do that, and went away sorrowful and unsaved. Jesus went on to say in verse 24, "*Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven*." It is not the wealth that dooms the person, but the unwillingness to forsake all and follow Jesus.

We also read in Ecclesiastes 5:10, "*He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity*." What is King Solomon trying to tell us? First,

let's look at the definition of vanity. Webster's *Collegiate Dictionary* defines it as "that which is vain or empty, idle, or useless." Some may believe this is easy for a rich man like King Solomon to say, but after many years and many mistakes, he came to realize that whether we die rich or poor, we leave it all behind (Ecclesiates 2). Jesus tells the parable of the rich fool in Luke 12:16-21. In it, the rich man put his confidence in himself and how well he had prospered, and he believes he is wealthy enough to take his ease in life. "*But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.*" (Luke 12:20-21)

What we learn from these examples is that worldly wealth is only temporal, empty and useless (vain) when it comes to the condition of our soul, because we leave it all, but there is a wealth which will be enough to keep us through all eternity.

SPIRITUAL WEALTH

To begin this section, I need to bring out the most important part of this entire lesson. To have spiritual wealth, a person must be saved. Without salvation a person cannot truly understand the things of God, nor can he receive the wonderful things that God has in store for him. Salvation only comes by repentance toward God and faith in Jesus. It is not a carnal plan, but a spiritual one. We must come to the Lord as a beggar, pleading our poor and desperate condition to Him, and when we meet His conditions, He will forgive us. When this happens, we become "*heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ*" (Romans 8:17). If we are heirs, then we can enjoy the things that belong to our Heavenly Father. He is ready to pour out His blessings upon us, and this is spiritual wealth.

Proverbs 24:3-4 states, "*Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established: And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with precious and pleasant riches.*" The wisdom here represents Jesus. He must be the builder of our spiritual house. We who have been saved should let Jesus take control of this house of clay which holds our soul. He can make it a beautiful earthly home that can be a testimony of the Lord's wonderful workmanship. Have you ever seen someone who lives close to the Lord? They have a beauty that radiates, because their light is shining as Jesus commanded. They have the best foundation that can be used, Jesus, and it is built by His wonderful gospel. It is also strong enough to withstand the storms that can come into a person's life.

Once the house is built, it needs to be established. That means that people can recognize it for what it really is. That can be accomplished by faith. Hebrews 11:1-2 states, "*Now faith is the substance of thing hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report.*" It is by faith that we understand more and more about Him and His wonderful works. Hebrews 11 recognizes many heroes of faith whose houses withstood the trials that they faced in life. It could not have been possible without faith. Verse 6 in that chapter states, "*But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*." So, without faith, our house could not be established.

After the house has been built and established, then it is time to fill it full of beautiful and wonderful things. The more wealth a person has, the more the house can be adorned. Almost everyone has walked through a house that might be considered a mansion. Many times the rooms are filled with grand furniture and great paintings which depict the person who abides in it. In the house of a child of God, the pictures should depict a Christian. A true Christian is one through whom Jesus Christ can be seen. As long as Jesus is the central focal point, then everything else will fit into place. Some of the beautiful treasures that come from this are a peace that passes all understanding, a love that reaches out to our fellow man, and an ever growing knowledge of the Lord and His promises. These spiritual treasures are worth more than any silver or gold. They are gifts from God because He loves us. The wonderful thing about spiritual wealth compared to worldly wealth is that when God is the one who provides wealth, He will also be there to help oversee it. We can depend on Him because He is God and there is none like Him. He cannot fail. Man, even when he tries his hardest, cannot promise that kind of dependability.

CAN WE HAVE SPIRITUAL AND WORLDLY WEALTH?

Is it impossible to have both? The answer is no. We read in the Bible of many rich men who followed God and stayed close to Him all their lives. They used their wealth to help advance the Lord's cause. It is not the wealth, but the love of the wealth, that is wrong. I Timothy 6:10 states, "*For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith*." If the Lord blesses us with material things, he expects us to use them for his cause. We need to support His causes, whether it be as Solomon who with all his riches built the temple, or the poor widow who offered the two mites (Mark 12:41-44). The main thing is that we must never let worldly wealth get in the way of our spiritual wealth. We must be ready like Moses: "*By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the*

recompense of the reward" (Heb. 11:24-26).

CONCLUSION

As you continue the study on the Pearl of Great Price, you will see that this is just a small part of that pearl. We must always look to God by studying His great teachings in the scriptures, and by staying close to Him in prayer. Never forget that when it comes to wealth, it isn't how much you have, but how much you give, and how you give it. "*Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver*" (II Cor. 9:7).

LESSON TWO

HEALTH

LESSON TEXT
PROVERBS 3:5-8

WRITTEN BY
ELDER DANNY HOLLAND

5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

7 Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.

8 It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.

INTRODUCTION

There is only one pearl of great price mentioned in our central theme text (Matt. 13:45-46). It refers to the salvation of one's soul, God's saving grace through Jesus Christ. It is heart-felt, heaven-sent, and eternal. Salvation comes at the end of genuine repentance and faith. Based on this pearl of great price and the Word of God, other important pearls can be established. Health is one we would like to consider at this time.

Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language defines health as "physical and mental well-being; soundness; freedom from defect, pain or disease." Health is a word in our language that is from Middle English and Anglo Saxon origin. It is derived from the words "heal" and "whole."

The definition of our lesson title may differ from the definitions found in a dictionary. Our definitions are based on the Word of God and the salvation experience.

Proverbs 4:20-22: "*My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh*."

Health, one of our pearls of great price, is more than mental and physical well-being. It is more than the absence of pain, physical defects and disease. To those who have been saved, God grants their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health daily. Our souls are sin-sick when we are lost. Jesus is the Great Physician. When we are saved, we are given eternal life through Jesus Christ. The soul has passed from death unto life (John 5:24). Our bodies will one day die because of sin (Rom. 5:12). Until that day, we need to care for our bodies by obeying the Word of God.

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."

Babylon had taken the healthiest, strongest and smartest children from Judah into captivity. Daniel was unwilling to eat and drink what had been offered up to idols. He trusted God for everything, including his health and the health of his friends. Daniel, along with Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abednego) made a deal with Melzar who was over them in authority. Daniel proposed they be fed on pulse (beans) and water. After ten days, they would compare their condition with that of those who ate from the king's table. At the end of ten days, the Hebrew children who ate pulse and drank only water were fairer and fatter in flesh than those that ate from the king's table. As they stood against idolatry and with God, He blessed them with good health.

Isaiah 53:5: "*But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed*."

Jesus is the great healer. Being saved is the most important feeling of wholeness (health) we can ever know. When our soul is safe and secure in Christ, we should have a desire to bring our bodies under subjection to the Holy Spirit that lives within. This includes living a healthy lifestyle according to Biblical principles. I Corinthians 9:27: "*But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway*."

The body is the earthly tabernacle in which the soul of man presently resides. God receives honor and glory when this tabernacle of clay is maintained as well as possible.

I Corinthians 3:16-20: "*Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*"

We should do our best to maintain the good health habits that we possess. For many this includes eating healthy foods, getting enough sleep, and proper exercise.

If we are not presently involved in proper healthy lifestyle choices, we should try to incorporate them into our everyday life. Regular health check-ups, monitoring a moderate weight, and checking blood pressure and cholesterol levels are good places to begin. We should also get sufficient exercise to sufficiently maintain our circulatory, muscular and skeletal systems.

Self-discipline is needed to refrain from activities that can cause harm, pain, and disease. Some things to avoid include: use of alcohol and tobacco; illegal and recreational use of drugs; gluttony; reading, watching, and listening to things that are detrimental to our health; sexual activity outside of marriage; and anything else that could cause undue harm to our bodies. Faith in the Lord and self-discipline are needed to accomplish these goals.

James 5:14-15: "*Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*"

We should always pray for our own health and the health of others.

Mark 5:25-34 "*And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague*."

In conclusion, the scriptures teach us that we have a responsibility to keep our bodies as healthy as possible. The first step to a truly healthy life (soul and body) is to trust the Lord with all our heart (get saved). We must trust Him for our spiritual and physical health. While depending on the Spirit to guide us, we must follow in the path He directs. We are to fear the Lord and depart (run away) from evil. When we practice these teachings, it will be health for our navel (inner man) and marrow to the bones (outer man).

OTHER RELEVANT SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:

II Cor. 5:1: "*For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*."

Mark 2:3-12: "*And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. But there*

was certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion."

Pro. 23:20-21: "*Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags*."

Rev. 21:4: "*And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*"

LESSON THREE

WISDOM

LESSON TEXT
PROVERBS 9:10-11

WRITTEN BY
ELDER MITCH GLASSCOCK

10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

11 For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased.

INTRODUCTION

As we continue our study on the theme of "Pearls of Great Price," the topic of this lesson is "Wisdom." True wisdom is truly of great value to the one that possesses it. It can also be of great value to others whose lives are touched by those who are wise and willing to share some of their wisdom. The writer of the lesson text was probably Solomon, who was recognized as one of the wisest men that ever lived. The scriptures tell us that Solomon obtained his wisdom from God. As the newly anointed young king of Israel, God appeared to Solomon in a dream, saying, "*Ask what I shall give thee*" (1 Kgs. 3:5). In answer, Solomon acknowledged the mercy and blessing bestowed upon his father, David, and that now he as king was as a little child, knowing little about how to rule. He also told God that he knew that he was in the midst of God's chosen and great people, which were very large in population. So Solomon asked God for wisdom to be a good ruler of these people, saying, "*Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?*" (1 Kgs. 3:9). God granted Solomon's request and the scriptures provide many examples of how Solomon used and applied that wisdom. Wisdom is of great value because true wisdom comes from God.

WHAT IS WISDOM?

Before defining wisdom, consider the definition of a related word which also appears in the lesson text, "knowledge." The *Merriam Webster Dictionary* defines "knowledge" as "the fact or condition of knowing something with familiarity gained through experience or association; the fact or condition of being aware of something; the fact or condition of having information or of being learned." So having knowledge means we know about something or have retained information about something. Knowledge is gained by being taught, by experience and by association.

A current *Merriam Webster Dictionary* defines "wisdom" as "accumulated philosophic or scientific learning; knowledge; ability to discern inner

qualities and relationships; insight; good sense; judgment; a wise attitude, belief or course of action." Noah Webster's 1828 *Webster's Dictionary of the English Language* provides a more extensive definition of wisdom as follows:

1. The right use or exercise of knowledge; the choice of laudable ends, and of the best means to accomplish them. This is wisdom in act, effect, or practice. If wisdom is to be considered as a faculty of the mind, it is the faculty of discerning or judging what is most just, proper and useful, and if it is to be considered as an acquirement, it is the knowledge and use of what is best, most just, most proper, most conducive to prosperity or happiness. Wisdom in the first sense, or practical wisdom, is nearly synonymous with discretion. It differs somewhat from prudence, in this respect; prudence is the exercise of sound judgment in avoiding evils; wisdom is the exercise of sound judgment either in avoiding evils or attempting good. Examples: Wisdom gained by experience, is of inestimable value. It is hoped that our rulers will act with dignity and wisdom; that they will yield every thing to reason, and refuse every thing to force.

2. In Scripture, human learning; erudition (having or showing great knowledge or learning); knowledge of arts and sciences.
Example: Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. (Acts 7.)

3. Quickness of intellect; readiness of apprehension; dexterity in execution; as the wisdom of Bezaleel and Aholiab. (Exodus 31.)

4. In Scripture theology, wisdom is true religion; godliness; piety; the knowledge and fear of God, and sincere and uniform obedience to his commands. This is the wisdom which is from above. (Psalm 90, Job 28.)

5. Profitable words or doctrine. (Psalm 37.)

The relationship between these two words appears to this writer to be the following: "wisdom is the sensible and meaningful application of knowledge." Wisdom means using acquired knowledge to exercise good judgment to make just decisions and solve the problems of life.

WHO IS WISE?

Throughout history, there have been numerous people recognized as being wise. There are people today that are considered to be wise. Is there someone in your life that you consider to be wise? From such people you seek advice or watch their actions as examples. People who are wise provide good and wholesome advice and examples for dealing with decisions, issues, and problems in life. They are able to provide such by rightly and effectively applying their knowledge and life experiences to the situations presented in life.

The lesson text comes from Proverbs. A proverb is a general truth, fundamental principle, or rule of conduct. As stated in the Introduction, Solomon, the son of King David, wrote many of the Proverbs. Since Solomon exhibited such great wisdom, many people came to Solomon seeking his wisdom on matters. He shared some of his great knowledge and wisdom in the scripture God inspired him to write including Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. This lesson will discuss the source of true wisdom.

THE SOURCE – WHERE DOES WISDOM COME FROM?

Solomon emphasizes gaining knowledge and applying the knowledge gained wisely throughout his writing in Proverbs. But he does not teach that we should seek to gain knowledge about any- and everything. The type of knowledge he emphasizes is knowledge of God, His commandments, and His will for our lives. Solomon and other scripture writers tell the source of true wisdom – God. Not only does verse 10 of the lesson confirm that knowledge and wisdom come from God, but other scriptures confirm this truth. Proverbs 1:7 states, "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge*." Psalms 111:10 states, "T*he fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments*…." Proverbs 2:6 states, "*For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding*."

In the book of James we are instructed that if we lack wisdom we should ask God. He gives to all liberally that ask in the right way, and are willing to use the wisdom given in the correct way (James 1:5). Then in James 3:13 the question is asked, "*Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you?*" The last portion of that verse gives the instruction for those that are to "*shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.*" Then in verses that follow, James describes the characteristics and source of earthly wisdom versus wisdom from God: "*But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.*"

THE FEAR OF THE LORD – THE BEGINNING OF KNOWLEDGE

So God is the source of wisdom. The fear and reverence of Him is the beginning of knowledge. It is the awareness and fear of God made real by His Holy Spirit that convicts us of our sins and draws us to Him for salvation. We learn and know of Him prior to being saved, but obtain a personal experience and knowledge of God and His Son when He saves us. People that reject the dealing and drawing of His Spirit are not wise

and risk never having a personal knowledge of God. The wise action of a lost sinner is to "*Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near*" (Isa. 55:6). The verses in Proverbs 1 which follow the lesson text tells how wisdom calls us to come to God to establish a right relationship (vv. 20-23,33) and warns of the danger for those who turn away and seek wisdom apart from God (vv. 24-32).

It is God's will and desire that all turn to Him for salvation. However, that is not the end of the knowledge He desires that we gain, or of the wisdom and understanding He wants to give us. After being saved He wants us to learn and grow through prayer, meditation, instruction and study.

"*But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*" (II Pet. 3:18). This describes what God wants for those He has saved: to grow in the grace He has bestowed on us and in the knowledge of His beloved Son, Jesus. To accomplish this growth, we should heed instructions like this verse provides and the many other instructions provided through the scripture. We also accomplish this growth by maintaining a close relationship with God through prayer, meditation and study. Proverbs 1 provides valuable instruction for growing in wisdom and avoiding evil: fear God, avoid participation in evil activities, and avoid the enticement of sinners to partake in such activities.

DO YOU WANT TO BE WISE?

Consider this question. If you want wisdom seek it from the true source. Seek to know God and to know His will for your life. You may not attain the wisdom and wealth of Solomon, but if you truly seek God's guidance and wisdom He will bless you. Read I Kings 3:5-14.

When we can recognize the source and great value of true wisdom, we cannot deny that it is truly a "pearl of great price."

LESSON FOUR

FREEDOM

LESSON TEXT
John 8:32-36

WRITTEN BY
ELDER BRAD WHEELER

32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

33 They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?

34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.

35 And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.

36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

INTRODUCTION

During this week, we are studying some very valuable concepts in our life (or pearls of great price). Freedom is one of these pearls. Freedom is defined as either the state or the quality of being free. When a person is granted freedom, they are liberated from enslavement. For a person to be liberated, control and power is taken from the oppressor and is returned to the individual.

Enslavement can take many forms and can involve individuals, corporate or governmental entities, or other worldly powers. We can even be imprisoned by our own actions (sin) or by our own lack of understanding of the word of God. When one surrenders his freedom, he transfers control or power to some other external entity.

In the United States, we are familiar with the terms "liberty" and "independence," but how often do we reflect and meditate on the impact that these concepts have on our lives? During our study, we will review several of the concepts of freedom provided by both our civil and spiritual authorities. It is our prayer that we build a deeper appreciation for God's blessings towards His people.

CIVIL FREEDOMS GRANTED TO U.S. CITIZENS

Historically, individuals in many countries around the world have not had the civil freedom to worship God according to the dictates (or prompting) of their own heart. Still today, people have their freedoms removed and are enslaved and oppressed for preaching the truth. There are at least two very good things we can do to protect our freedoms. The first is to pray that the Lord will continue to grant us these freedoms; and the second is to proudly exercise those freedoms by worshiping our Lord.

Civilly, freedom of religion is granted to us by the U.S. Constitution under the Bill of Rights in the First Amendment. Great misunderstandings exist regarding our First-Amendment rights as citizens. These misunderstandings can easily be corrected by a quick review of our rights. The First Amendment in its entirety reads as follows:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

The First Amendment grants us freedom of religion, and not freedom from religion. Furthermore, nowhere in the Constitution, or related Admendments, can one find the "separation of Church and State clause." The First Amendment is only intended to prevent the establishment of a Federal Church or a Federal Religious Organization, and not to abolish all religious principles in government. Public prayer, public religious displays, references to the Christian God Jehovah, the posting of the Ten Commandments, and religious exhortations were all commonplace in any 17th-, 18th-, or early 19th-century national, state or local governmental assembly. Our founder's purpose in creating the First Amendment was to reject a central, nationalized church, common in most of Europe when the First Amendment was written.

OUR CIVIL FREEDOMS MAY BE REMOVED

We presently have freedoms that the large majority of the people living both now and in the past have never had. God has truly blessed us in the age and country in which we live.

We need to understand that our civil freedoms have never been guaranteed by God. By treating our freedoms lightly, we treat our present freedoms as if they are our "God-given rights" but they are not. Mathew 10 records that Jesus clearly told us to not be surprised that we would be treated by the world in a similar manner as He was. We, as servants of Christ, are not greater than Christ; therefore, if He lost his civil freedoms to the point that He was placed on the cross, then what might we expect?

The Baptist preacher and author John Bunyan served a twelve-year prison sentence for preaching the gospel truth in England. He personally suffered greatly while in prison but continued to preach the gospel through prison walls. Bunyan, within in a few days of entering prison, even lost a daughter at her birth. Had it not been for the freedom he was given in prison to write, he likely would have entered into obscurity and there would be little, if any, historical knowledge of this man of God. His wife sold his prison writings to feed herself and their children during Bunyan's time in prison. This allowed Bunyan to widely spread the truths of God.

While in prison, Bunyan penned several significant works, including *Pilgrim's Progress*, likely to be the most-read book in the English language after the Bible. The poem "Prison Meditations" was a poem written in 1665 during Bunyan's fifth year in prison and includes the stanzas below:

I am indeed in prison now
In body, but my mind
Is free to study Christ, and how
Unto me he is kind.

For tho' men keep my outward man
Within their locks and bars,
Yet by the faith of Christ I can
Mount higher than the stars.

Their fetters cannot spirits tame,
Nor tie up God from me;
My faith and hope they cannot lame;
Above them I shall be.

This poem finely illustrates the point that though we may even be physically enslaved, these powers are limited by the almighty God. Bunyan demonstrated that the same powers which held him naturally were completely unable to take certain things from him. Bunyan, while in prison, was able to exercise the powers of his mind, his faith, his spirit, his hope and, most of all, worship of his God.

GOD'S FREEDOM NATURALLY: A SIMILITUDE OF WHAT HE CAN DO SPIRITUALLY

God demonstrates the spiritual liberation that He is capable of by naturally freeing those that serve Him in the truth. The following is a list of a few instances of the freedom that God naturally has provided:

1. After James the brother of John was killed, Peter was cast into prison but freed by the angel of God when the angel spoke: "...*Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off* …" (Acts 12:7).

2. Paul and Silas were set free by an earthquake: "… *and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed*" (Acts 16:26).

3. The Israelites were freed from the Egyptians by the mighty hand of God (Ex. 12-14).

4. The three Hebrew children were freed from the fiery furnace when they boldly said, "*If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king*" (Dan. 3:17).

5. When Daniel was protected from the lion he spoke these words in praise: "*My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me…*" (Dan. 6:22).

6. Other stories include the year of Jubilee that freed the Hebrew slaves on the seventh year, and Lazarus being raised from the grave and freed from his grave clothes.

FREEDOM TO ACT DOES NOT IMPLY THAT CONSEQUENCES DO NOT EXIST

People sometimes believe that true freedom means making decisions

without having to "pay the price" for any consequences. With this worldly theory, it is implied that if there are consequences to actions, then "true" freedom does not exist. It should be noted that every single action we take has related consequences. Some consequences will be good and some will be bad, some intended and others unintended, but freedom is the ability to take one path or make one decision over the other.

Aesop's fable of the Ant and the Grasshopper illustrates that both the Ant and the Grasshopper had the same freedom. The Ant freely chose to prepare for winter while the grasshopper freely chose to enjoy his summer doing nothing. They both had the same time, opportunity and freedoms, but simply chose different paths.

Freedom is the ability to choose one action over the other. Consequences are the result of us exercising our freedoms and making choices. We may choose to do one thing over another, but we are still exercising our freedoms to choose the actions with the desired outcomes. Our prayer should be that we take the freedoms that God gives us and use them for God's honor and glory. What better consequences or outcomes could we have than to fully live a life for Him?

TRUE LIMITATIONS PLACED ON OUR FREEDOM

There are limitations to our freedoms that occur and have nothing to do with the civil authorities. Our upbringing, our relationships, our families, false understandings, and misconceptions all hinder or limit our spiritual freedoms. One example is our lesson text. The Pharisees were enslaved by their own incorrect thinking. Christ was pointing out that their trust was in their earthly father Abraham, and not in Christ. They were so enslaved in thought that they could not even recognize the Messiah, though He stood right before them.

Sin can also limit our ability to freely serve God. God may free us, but subsequent sin will limit our ability to properly serve God. There are many examples in the Bible where God freed his people, only to find that they had once again enslaved themselves through disobedience to Him. God loves us and desires that we walk in the newness of life. God desires that we live in the freedom that Christ gives.

JESUS FREES SPIRITUALLY

No matter what may happen to us, the powers that exist are unable to take our soul's salvation. We cannot be taken (or plucked) from the Father's hand, as Jesus is the one that secures us safely. Wonderful words of freedom are breathed into the soul when an individual is saved, and this precious freedom comes only by the blood of Jesus Christ. As stated in the lesson text, if Jesus is the one that makes you free, you will be freed indeed.

IN CLOSING

In the book entitled *Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ* (1678) John Bunyan wrote the following statement:

…But now, in the next place, a word of encouragement to you that are the saints of the Lord. Consider what a happy state thou are in that hast gotten the faith of the Lord Jesus into thy soul. (But be sure thou have it.) I say, how safe, how sure, how happy are thou. For when others go to hell, thou must go to heaven; when others go to the devil, thou must be set at liberty, at ease, and at freedom; when others must roar for sorrow of heart, thou shall also sing for the joy of heart.

In Revelation 12, it was prophesied that the church overcame the great dragon (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of His testimony. As we may see some of our civil freedoms erode, let us not lose sight of what joys that we have in store. Governments become oppressive. They may indeed take civil freedoms away from people. However, there are things that nations and governments will be unable to seize. They are unable to rob you of your thoughts, or to remove the love that God has shed abroad in your hearts. Thanks be unto Jesus Christ our Lord.

LESSON FIVE

PEACE & LOVE

LESSON TEXT
ROMANS 5:1

WRITTEN BY
ELDER JERRY MILLER

1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

INTRODUCTION

There are many different ways in which a person can experience peace. When a war is declared to be over, the soldiers who have been fighting can experience peace. People who have learned how to get along with one another – a husband and wife, siblings, parents and children—can say, "We have peace among ourselves, in our home."

However, given the fact that this lesson is based primarily upon Romans 5:1 above, *peace with God* is the type of peace with which we will concern ourselves in this lesson. After all, no greater peace can be known.

Though it is difficult to really define this peace that the Apostle Paul spoke of in this epistle to the Romans, seeing that it is much better felt than told, perhaps the following definition, which was taken from Webster's 1828 *Dictionary of the English Language*, will give us something of a foundation to build upon. Peace: "freedom from agitation or disturbance by the passions, as from fear, terror, anger, anxiety, or the like; quietness of mind, tranquility, calmness, quiet of conscience."

The person who has truly come to know the peace of God has nothing to fear, and does experience a great calming of the soul. Let's consider these words from Psalm 116:3-8: "*The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful. The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling*."

In this psalm it is easy to see that the Psalmist relates an experience with God in which he came to the Lord with great inner turmoil. "*The sorrows of death compassed, the pains of hell got hold upon me, I found trouble and sorrow."* (Psalms 116:3) In this state of great spiritual anguish, David said, "*Then called I upon the name of the Lord; 0 Lord, I beseech (beg) thee, deliver my soul."* Psalms 116:4) What was he asking God to do? **TO GIVE HIM PEACE!** We know that God heard and answered his prayer, because he proclaimed with great exclamation, "*For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling."* (Psalms 116:8)

*Therefore being justified by **faith**, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.(Romans 5:1)* Did David exercise faith? Yes. Because if he had not believed with all his heart that God could and would deliver his soul, he could not and would not have experienced such salvation. John 3:16 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.*"

Given the fact that we are told in God's word that we must be justified by **faith** to have peace with God, it is imperative that we consider this question: What is faith? Jesus taught us that those who believe in Him as God's only begotten Son will have the peace of knowing they are saved, that they have been given everlasting life. What did Jesus mean when he said, **WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH?** The word "believeth" in this passage means to rely on, cling to, and entrust the well-being of your soul to. It is more than believing in the Lord's existence, or believing the facts concerning Him and His work. It is full reliance upon and full trust in Him for the salvation of one's soul. It is by this type of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that we come to have peace with God!

Peace with God can only be obtained through the Lord Jesus Christ. Consider this prophecy from Isaiah about Jesus (Isaiah 9:6): "*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."* If you desire peace, you will have to get it from the Prince of Peace. Acts 4:12 states, in reference to Jesus, "*Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*" Furthermore, Jesus spoke concerning Himself and said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*" (John 14:6).

In the Gospel according to Mark, 4:35-39, we find a great example of the ability Jesus has to give peace. "*And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow; and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.*" Jesus, by saying, "Peace be still," can calm the raging sea. Jesus, by saying, "*Peace, be still,*" can calm any troubling situation in our life. Jesus, by saying, "*Peace be still*," can calm

the troubled soul!

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.(Rom. 5:1)

We will now turn our attention to the second part of this lesson, and consider some of the things the scriptures teach us about **love**.

Love is the greatest of all. If it were not for God's love toward us, we could never have peace with Him. In the Apostle Paul's writing to the Corinthians, we find the following: "*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity (love), I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling symbol. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity (love), I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity (love), it profiteth me nothing. Charity (love) suffereth long, and is kind: charity (love) envieth not: charity (love) vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil: Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth: Beareth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things. Charity (love) never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail: whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away*" (I Cor. 13:1-8). In verse 13 of this same chapter, Paul wrote: "*And now abideth faith, hope, charity (love), these three; but the greatest of these is charity (love).*"

What a wonderful thing love is. What a great blessing is bestowed upon a person who is loved. What a great blessing it is for a child to have **loving** parents. What a great blessing it is for any man to have a **loving** wife, or for any woman to have a **loving** husband. What a great blessing it is for parents to have **loving** children. However, the love that people experience from these earthly relationships fails in comparison to those who are blessed enough to **know the love of Christ**.

I John 3:1 reads, "*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the son's of God; therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.*"

What wonderful words are being spoken when one person says to another person or persons, **I LOVE YOU!** But people are not convinced of love when it is only words being spoken. Love must manifest itself by that which we do. I John 3:18 says, "*My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue: but in deed and in truth.*" Those who are able to truly know they are loved are not just those who are being told, but those who are being shown!

God did not just tell the world of His love toward us; He manifested it. I John 4:9: "*In this was manifested (made known, made clear) the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.*"

What, but love, could have possibly prompted God to send His only begotten Son into this world? God sent Him here knowing the things that He would suffer. God sent Him here to die for us. Galatians 4:4-5 states: "*But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*"

Romans 8:31-32 says, "*What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He (God) that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*"

Furthermore, Isaiah 53:6 tells us, "*All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way: and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*"

I will remind you again what the Apostle Paul wrote concerning charity (love). "*And now abideth faith, love: these three: but the greatest of these is LOVE!*"

Love is the greatest. Among those things which drive us, which motivate us, love is the greatest of all forces. Love has caused people to do things which could not be motivated by anything other than love. Love is that compelling force that has caused parents to do without things they need, in order to provide for their children. Love is that force that has caused people to lay down their own life so that someone else's life could be spared. Jesus said, "*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you"* (John 15:13-14).

One of the most well-known verses in all the Bible tells us, "*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.*" (John 3:16)

This love that I am writing about cannot be fully understood in the minds of men. Consider these verses from Ephesians 3:14-19: "*For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man: That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith: that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height: And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."* Our understanding of the love of Christ is not carnal. *"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be"* (Rom. 8:7). What understanding we have of His great love must come through Christ dwelling in our hearts through faith, whereby we can be **ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN**

LOVE.

In these verses from Paul's writing to the Ephesians, he spoke of **knowing the love of Christ.** Not knowing of His love, or knowing what the scriptures say about His love, but personally knowing the great love of Christ that passes knowledge. How does anyone come to actually know His love? The scriptures certainly give us the answer. The Bible tells us plainly that God has commanded all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30). We are also taught that we must believe. "*Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*" The Apostle Paul, after preaching for three years in Ephesus, called the elders of the church together and reminded them of this: "*And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have taught you publicly, and from house to house. Testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Acts 20: 20-21).

When a person, by the help of God, has repented of their sins and believed with all their heart upon the Lord Jesus Christ, He graciously gives them eternal salvation. When this happens to an individual, God assures his or her salvation by what the Apostle Paul describes in Romans 8:16: "*The Spirit itself (that being the Holy Spirit) beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.*"

It is at this point that we come to know the love of God. Romans 5:5 tells us: "*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.*"

Earlier in this lesson, I spoke of the fact that love is known by manifestation. There has never been a greater manifestation of love than what took place at Calvary when the Lord Jesus Christ died for the sins of this world. In I John 4:10, we read: *"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."*

Dear God, our Heavenly Father, thank You for loving us so much that You gave us Your only begotten son. Dear Jesus, thank You for loving us so much that You were willing to come. Dear Holy Spirit, thank You for shedding the love of God abroad in our hearts.