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**

High School

The Missionary Baptist
Vacation Bible School Literature Committee presents

Pearls Of Great Price

Vacation Bible School Lessons for High School
Written by Brother Danny Hayes

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LESSON ONE

WEALTH

LESSON TEXT
MATT. 6:19-21

WRITTEN BY
BROTHER DANNY HAYES

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

What do you want in life? It's a simple question, but the answer is one that seems to escape so many of us. The world that we live in bombards us every day with possibilities. We all want things. We all want to improve our lot. It seems that the more we see, the more we want. There's always something else that promises to improve our lives in some way. So we go from wanting this to wanting that in a pretty willy-nilly fashion. We want and we get, and then discover that it's not enough, because then we want something else. How many times have you wanted something and gotten it and then after you'd started wanting something else noticed that the thing that you had wanted so badly before looked kind of cheap and inferior? Now that may have been a minor thing because the pursuit of that thing had not been a major portion of your life. But what if you actually had pursued something your entire life, had devoted your life to the getting of it, and only after obtaining it had realized that it was a fool's dream? How would you feel? It's for this reason that most of us want the things that we desire to be of lasting value to us, but so many of us get caught up in the bells and whistles, the glitter and shine, and forget to be as discriminating as we should. A wise man will spend his time and energy in getting something of real, lasting value.

A new $50,000 luxury car and 41 ounces of gold are about the same value at the time of this writing. How much will they be worth a year from now? Five years from now? A wise man knows that a luxury car is an expenditure - a use of wealth - while the gold is an investment - a source of wealth. While the car suffers dings, scratches and general wear and tear and becomes worth less and less, the gold will remain gold just as it is now, will probably rise in value. Even if the gold doesn't become more valuable, it won't depreciate as the car certainly will. The difference between the man who puts his resources into lasting things like gold and the man who puts his resources into temporary things like cars is a difference in thinking.

The man buying gold is thinking about the future, while the man who buys cars is thinking about driving them today and not what they'll look like in 10 years.

In this series of lessons, we want to look at things that we all want, but also to look for the highest and most lasting value possible.

WEALTH

Wealth is something that we all really want, truth be told. When we are wealthy, we have more power and influence because we are independent. We owe obedience to very few men, and can afford to be frank with most without fear of economic reprisal. When we are wealthy, we are secure. We can, with our great financial resources, endure troubles of this life that would make a virtual slave of many people. We don't worry about what will happen to us because we can buy what is needed for most any occurrence that may arise.

Being wealthy is not a bad thing. Many godly men in the bible, such as Job, Abraham, and Jacob were very rich men. While they did have the advantages of being wealthy hoqwever, they trusted not in their riches, but in God. Think about the great effect that a godly man with wealth in this world could have. But is worldly wealth really the ultimate wealth that we can possess? In this lesson, we'll look at that which is the real wealth we should strive for and how we can gain it.

Wealth can have several characteristics. For our purposes, we want to focus on just a couple: the type of wealth it is and the durability of the wealth.

PAPER WEALTH

"Paper wealth" is an appraisal of how much one's assets could be sold for. For instance, you may own a diamond for which you paid $5,000 a year ago. So you traded $5,000 of your wealth for a diamond of the same value. You still had $5,000 of wealth, but it was in a different form, something beautiful and of equal value to the money.

So continuing with our example, let's say that as of today, the diamond market has risen dramatically, making all quality diamonds more valuable. Let's say that in the diamond markets today, your diamond is now worth $10,000. So on "paper," your wealth has doubled. You don't really have the extra $5,000. You just have the diamond – the same one that you sunk your $5,000 wealth into. You can't really go to a restaurant and buy a hamburger with this extra wealth. From the perspective of what you can see and touch, you don't really have any more than you had when you bought the diamond. You still just have a diamond. Our society recognizes the valuation of such things and so gives you credit for having $10,000 worth of assets even though you only paid $5,000 for them a year ago. Your "paper wealth" has increased by $5,000.

REAL WEALTH

Is $10,000 truly the value of that diamond? The only way to find that out for sure is to sell it and see how much money it will bring. Commodity markets such as the one for diamonds are convenient ways for people to invest in things that can increase in value. They have published rates at which the commodities currently sell, but sometimes these markets can be volatile. Different events in the world as well as within the market can change prices quickly. Your diamond may be worth $10,000 today and drop in price tomorrow, depending upon these events. Let's say you decide to sell your diamond when you hear the price is $10,000, but by the time that you can arrange a sale and get a buyer, the price has dropped to $9,000. One thousand dollars of your "paper wealth" has evaporated. Now you've sold the diamond, and your investment of your $5,000 wealth has turned into $9,000. Now you actually have assets of $9,000. This is the full value of an asset that you are holding in your hand. As long as you don't spend it, it will always be $9,000. This is "real wealth."

PAPER (FLEETING) COMPARED TO REAL (LASTING)

An increase in paper wealth can disappear as quickly as the paper itself when touched with a lit match. In fact, there are things that we can invest our wealth into that will not only make gains disappear, but also can obliterate all of the wealth that we invested to begin with.

An example: Investors in Bernie Madoff's company invested with their real wealth. Billions of dollars were pumped into the company (that we now know was being made to look like a company of real worth with incredible gains while it was not). At the end of it all, the investments that all those people had paid real wealth for, sometimes their life's savings, were not worth the paper that they were printed on, because the company that these people trusted was really just a sham. In truth, the entire time that they thought the company, and therefore their investment, was increasing wildly, it was really just becoming more and more a house of cards until it became so flimsy that it collapsed from its own weight. These investors thought they were building real wealth, but it was only on paper, and the paper had lies written on it.

If an investor in that company had chosen another investment that may not have promised such huge gains, but that seemed more believable, things might have been different for him. He probably would not have experienced the huge gains that he was lied to about with Madoff, but the value that he would have ended up with might have been real.

How easy is it to get rid of a million dollars on a spending spree? It can be difficult because many of the things that you can buy have worth also. You might spend the entire million, but end up with almost that much in assets. But how quickly can paper wealth disappear? As we've seen above, it can be gone in a heartbeat with absolutely nothing to show for it. We should be careful to look for real worth and not be seduced by fleeting "paper wealth." It may look really good when presented to us, but in reality may rob us of not only expected gains, but also of the wealth that we started with.

TEMPORARY WEALTH

Paper wealth is not the only kind of wealth that is fleeting. How many times have we seen stories of a sports star who made millions of dollars per year in the pros only to end up years later destitute, perhaps even homeless? This is an example of temporary wealth. It's not true wealth because it can't be counted on for the future. They got to where they were by living large, giving no thought to the future, and taking no care to protect their wealth by investing it into lasting things. These people may have spent for lavish entertainment and parties or may have trusted too much to unscrupulous financial managers, but the bottom line is that they did not seek true wealth. They sought other things. They had real wealth for a time. They were able to spend money on a lot of things. When you spend your wealth on parties, where are you when the party is over? When you spend your wealth investing in fool's promises, what kind of wealth do those promises return? Temporary wealth is often made temporary by those who lost it. With different efforts on their part, their wealth might have been lasting, but because of the way that they handled it, it became temporary.

Still, there are others who lost wealth through no fault of their own. They unknowingly had their money in the wrong place and lost it all. When you think about it, every bit of wealth that we acquire in this life will be lost to us. The real source of all temporary wealth is this world. We had nothing when we were born. Everything that we have gained has been built upon nothing, even if we were given everything we have. And alas, when we die, we will leave everything that we have accumulated right here in this world and go to what lies beyond without it. So we can say that all wealth in this world is temporary to us.

LASTING WEALTH

So what good is wealth if it doesn't last? How much could we enjoy being truly wealthy today if we knew that we were going to be penniless tomorrow? Is it really wealth if it doesn't last?

How long does wealth need to last to allow us to be truly wealthy? Remember that we said earlier that wealth is security. How secure are we if the wealth disappears at any point in the future whether it's tomorrow or 100 years from now? So does it need to last us the rest

of our lives? Is that long enough? What about after we die? Don't we want to be secure after we die too? Of course we do. Everybody wants to be safe forever. To be truly wealthy, we need to be wealthy forever. But we've said that we can't take our wealth with us when we die.

So now what? This is what's really wrong with riches of this life. As we've said, they don't last. In our lesson text, we see that Jesus said just that, but He also said that riches that are accumulated in heaven will last forever. That's important because that is the forever wealth that we need to be truly wealthy. That's what we need to be secure forever. So how to we go about acquiring it?

THE ONE SOURCE OF LASTING WEALTH

Interestingly, just as with worldly riches, heavenly riches can only be accumulated in this life. Our time in this life is the limit of the pursuit of wealth here or in heaven and so we are presented with a choice. Look once again at the scripture text for this lesson. Jesus outlines that choice to us here. He doesn't say, "pile up treasure here, but don't forget heaven." He also doesn't say "pile up treasure in heaven, but you can work on it here also." What He actually says is that we shouldn't spend our time here working for worldly treasure at all, but that we should only strive for treasure in heaven. He states this in such a way that we can tell that it must be one way or the other.

In another place, He says "*No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon*." (Matthew 6:24) Here again, he makes the choice clear. To serve mammon (the false god of riches and greed) is to exclude serving God. Notice that Jesus says that the pursuit of worldly riches is worship of a false god. By saying this, he hearkens back to the first of the ten commandments "*Thou shalt have no other gods before me*." (Exodus 20:3) By this there can be no doubt that the pursuit of worldly riches is anti-God.

It should be pointed out that this does not condemn making a living. We are expected to support our families and try to do the best that we can. There is nothing wrong with the wise handling of the resources that God has blessed us with. As stated before, Abraham was very rich. He no doubt made wise decisions and God blessed him greatly. The scriptures make it plain that Abraham's eyes were on God. He did not seek riches here, but in heaven.

Likewise, the reference to Abraham is not saying that if we follow God, He will make us rich in this life. That's a heresy that is taught by many self-serving "religious" leaders that only seek followers by preaching a feel-good theology. We are promised nothing in this life

for following God except that He will be with us. If He is truly at the center of our lives, this will be more than enough for us.

All Jesus is saying is that worldly riches are temporary, that heavenly riches are forever, and that we cannot pursue both. Worldly riches are the paper wealth that is only a promise with no lasting value. Heavenly riches are real, lasting wealth.

He ends by saying that our treasure will be where we put our hearts. Where are our hearts? Are they focused upon the world and its false treasures, or upon God and His heavenly treasures? Jesus is saying that we can choose where our hearts are. Remember that if our heart's focus is set on anything of this world, it is focused away from God. We must choose whether we will seek God or not. That choice is there for everyone. Once we decide to seek Him, He will help us to find Him.

When we invest in anything of real value, there is a cost. What must we invest to reap the real treasure in heaven? Simply stated, everything. Not that we have anything of any value to God – we don't. Only one thing in this world was ever worth anything to God, and that was the righteousness of Jesus. Jesus died so that His righteousness would be free to all of us. To partake in His righteousness, we must give up all that we are. What are we? We are self-willed, self-centered, self-aggrandizing, self-protecting, and thoroughly sinful. Those may not seem like things anyone would want to hold on to, but we do - precisely because we are those things through and through. In Luke 18:18-23, when the rich young ruler asked Jesus how to obtain eternal life, Jesus told him to sell everything and give it to the poor and to follow Him. But this just made the man sad because he was very rich and would not give it up. If he wouldn't even give up his possessions, he most certainly would not give up himself. It's sad that so many people are not willing to do this. If we do, if we turn our backs upon all that we are, if we let go of our unsavory nature, we can then hold to Jesus with both hands. In turn, He then holds us and gives us His righteousness. He makes us one of His.

What's really wonderful is that we haven't really purchased anything. We have acquired the riches of heaven by inheritance. As a partaker of the righteousness of Jesus, we've been adopted by God. We have given up something however. We've given up our natural inheritance which is sin, death, eternal pain, and misery so that we could gain a perfect inheritance. One of eternal riches and ease.

What does our treasure include? Imagine being the heir of the king of a vast nation. You could rise in the morning, look out your window, and know that everything as far as you could see would become yours.
Try this. Go outside this evening.

Look at the land all around you. Look at the vastness of the earth, but don't stop there. Look up into the sky and see all the stars. Can you count them? People have estimated, but no one can count them. God owns it all! If you know Him, everything that is His is also yours. But that's not all. What you're seeing will someday be destroyed and replaced with something even better, more vast, and more beautiful. And if you truly have treasure in heaven, it will all be yours.

In our next lesson, something else that everyone wants – Health.

LESSON TWO

HEALTH

LESSON TEXT
PROVERBS 3:5-8

WRITTEN BY
BROTHER DANNY HAYES

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

"...*a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians*..." (Luke 8:43). We all want to be healthy, but the question comes - "what price health?" That's a question that is very much on many people's minds these days. With the increasing knowledge in medical technology that mankind has achieved, maintenance of, and restoration to good health is possible today in cases where just a few years ago doctors could only shake their heads. With all those possibilities come greater and greater costs. Many people are faced with costs so huge for medical treatment that they have little hope of ever paying them back. Still, we are grappling with the question - "what price health?" How much would a man give to have the health of his diseased child restored? How much to walk upon the earth a few years longer? The answer of course, is all that he has. With all the advances in medical technology we begin to see treatments that are astounding, only to have a cost that puts them out of the reach of all but the rich.

How we resolve such matters is a question that our society is trying to come to terms with. We sometimes say that you can't put a price on life, but in our world, there is a cost to everything. Over one tenth of our gross national product is now spent on healthcare, and some say it could be as much as four times that in 20 years. Rationing of healthcare has been talked about. It seems that we are moving toward a point that we must truly put a price on human life. When that time comes, what will our health be worth? Will we need to be "valuable" to society in order to get the care that we need? These are questions that we will grapple with in the coming years.

But even if we could all get all the very best healthcare that is possible, what would be the end result? We may live a few extra years, but we'd all die anyway. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could all live in perfect health forever? Read on...

OUR BODIES

The human body was truly made to last. When God created man, He created us perfectly. There were no infirmities, no illnesses, no aches and pains and no process of aging. Man was created to live in perfect health forever. However, when man sinned, everything changed. The human body lost it's ability to remain perpetually young, and became susceptible to a host of maladies that are with us today. It's true that our bodies as they are have an amazing capacity for self-healing and for protecting themselves against diseases, but still we are far from that blessed state in which we were created.

Even yet, when we are young, there are not many things that can hold us down for long. Our young bodies are strong and even though much of that strength goes into growth, there is plenty of strength left over for sometimes frenetic activity. We can keep going without really wearing down, maybe needing just a few minutes of rest after an entire day of physical labor. There are some things that even young, strong bodies cannot overcome. A visit to a children's hospital is all that's needed to bring home the point that even the most vital among us are weak before some of the diseases that plague mankind.

Then there is aging. It's wonderful to be young, and enjoy the bounding energy that we're blessed with at that time. Nobody lives and stays the same. We are all, every second, getting older. As we age, things happen to our bodies. The mechanisms slow down. Our cells don't repair themselves as well and as quickly as they once did. Our strength begins to fade. Our energy begins to seep away. Our systems have slowed and don't work as well, we are more susceptible to sickness, whether serious or not. Because our cells aren't repaired like they once were, we don't bounce back from sickness as fast as we once did.

Speaking of sicknesses, have you ever thought about all the things that can go wrong with our bodies? If you've ever paid attention in biology class, you know what a dizzying array of interconnected systems our bodies are. It seems that every part of our body is dependent upon several other parts of our body, which are in turn dependent upon others and so on. What if something goes wrong with one little part? If you've watched many medical shows, you've seen a fictional but sometimes medically accurate picture of how one small problem can start a chain reaction of failures until the body can no longer sustain itself. Anyone with diabetes knows how something as elemental as your blood sugar level can affect many systems in your body. It's a testament to the wisdom of God in His design of the human body that any of us live long enough to draw one breath, but when you think about how our bodies are so dependent upon so many things working correctly together, you begin to see how precarious our lives are.

Even if all our systems are working correctly, there are so many outside things that can harm our health. Bacteria and viruses are bad and evidence shows that they may even be becoming worse. The HIV-1 virus is just one example of ever mutating viruses that we have no cure for. Bacteria mutate to become resistant to our medicines and as humans multiply and live closer and travel wider, the danger of pandemic becomes real. Then there are the things that we do to ourselves. When we're young, we don't think about the harm that we do to ourselves with the habits that we develop. The foods we normally eat can have a bad effect on us in adulthood. Everyone knows that smoking is bad for us, but it's difficult for us to see that it will happen to us until it's too late. These are just the things that we know are bad. What about staying in the sun unprotected? But be careful, because if you don't get enough sunlight, you could develop a vitamin D deficiency.

DOCTORS

Now that we're thoroughly depressed, let's change the subject, and talk about the other side of the coin – doctors. By doctors, we're really talking about the entire medical industry. When looking at the strides that the medical field has made in just the last 50 years, we can't help but be amazed. Fifty years ago, the first coronary bypass surgery was performed on a man who lived a year after the surgery. Today, with improved and standardized techniques and vastly better drugs, a similar patient who participates in his health maintenance has a very good chance of living a full, long life. In 1960 cancer was often a death sentence and those few who survived were often maimed. In 2006, the 5-year survival rate for all cancers was over 67%. Knowledge is increasing, seemingly at an exponential pace.

Even with all the advances, think of this. There is no cure for cancer. True, there are treatments that can make cancer go away, but they are not universally effective. When you have an ordinary infection, a doctor can prescribe antibiotics that will just about always clear up the infection, but with cancer, doctors can only speak of their treatments in terms of statistics. They may tell you that there is a 90% chance of survival for 5 years, but they can't say that they have a cure. Cancer is not the only thing. There are many things that doctors cannot do much about. This is no slam against doctors. It's a fact. Ask a leading doctor what causes Alzheimer's. They can't tell you because they don't really know. So with all the knowledge that the medical field has amassed over the last 50 years, there is still a vast amount that they don't know.

THE GREAT PHYSICIAN

Still depressed? Let's talk about someone who can truly help. An honest doctor will tell you that in

many cases he can only do things to stop damage from being so bad or administer treatments that can make the right conditions for healing. He could do the same things for two patients with identical problems, and one might get better while the other might die. There are many doctors who pray over their patients because they recognize that only God can heal, that He holds the well being of the individual in His great hands.

When there is a problem with some of the systems in a huge building that nobody seems to be able to figure out, who do the owners call? The architect of course. He designed the building and he knows how everything is supposed to go together and work together. Remember about how our bodies are extraordinarily complicated systems within systems and so on? Well God is the designer of all that. When our bodies fail and doctors scratch their heads in puzzlement, God knows everything that's going on in there. Jesus said that God has our hairs numbered (Matthew 10:30) and that was just an example to let us know that God is aware of everything. Rest assured, dear reader, that if your body is having problems, God is aware.

Why did God design us as He did? He could have made us much simpler so that there wouldn't be so much to break down. Remember though that God designed us in perfection. One of the key designs that God gave us was the lack of sin, but we introduced sin into our system and brought sickness and aging upon ourselves. And so here we are. We sometimes think that we're ok, but we're not. We're all dying. Sometimes things happen to us to let us know that. And then is when we're ready to ask for help. But when we realize that even if we're cured of whatever is ailing us that we're still dying, what do we do?

Jesus actually used the ailments of others to teach of God's great power and salvation. Look over the gospels where He was teaching the masses. What is one of the most prominent things that He did? He healed people of their infirmities. The verse that we began the introduction with tells of a woman that had no hope of ever being well again except for Jesus. In Matthew 9:21, it says "...*she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole*." She then pushed her way through the press of people around Him, touched His hem, and was immediately healed. Jesus said that her faith had cured her, but the healing power came from God.

Jesus used healing as instruction and not necessarily to those He healed. In a very familiar passage in Mark 2:1-12, we see Jesus teaching in a house in Capernaum. A man with palsy (meaning he was so crippled that he could only lay on his bed) had gotten four friends to carry him, bed and all to Jesus. But the house was so packed with people that they could not get the man close to Jesus. Being

determined, they went to the roof, removed part of it, and let the man's bed down to where Jesus was. Jesus, with the insight of God, could see what the man's most pressing concern was and could see his faith. He said "*Son, thy sins be forgiven thee*." (v. 5) When He saw in the hearts of unbelievers there that they thought He blasphemed by saying He could forgive sins, He proceeded to heal the man of his palsy in order to show them His authority to do both.

God heals even today. He has the power to cure the incurable. We've all heard stories of doctors who are puzzled by horrible diseases that just disappear overnight. But that doesn't happen to everyone. Who does God heal? It would seem obvious that it would be those who ask Him for help, but even among those, who? Romans 9:18, speaking of God, says, "*Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy...*" He will heal those whom He chooses to heal. It will be for His reasons. God isn't a miracle machine on which we can just push a button anytime we need one. He does what pleases Him. But still, it is a wise thing to ask. We don't know if Jesus healed all who came to Him when he was ministering to the multitudes, but we can be certain that He did not heal those who avoided Him.

We should remember that even more dire than our obviously precarious physical health situation is our spiritual health situation. We are born diseased. We have inherited sin from our fathers all the way back to Adam. God created man perfect in spirit, but we corrupted ourselves. There is no doctor among us who even has treatment, though many may try to overcome it with things or activities in the world around us. There is no medicine, chemical or herbal, to make us better. The only hope for our spirit is healing directly from God. No man has an answer. And like so many health problems that many of us have, we did it all to ourselves.

We might ask if it is even appropriate to ask God for help after we messed up what He made to be perfect? This is precisely why Jesus came to us. He is our intercessor with God. Big word...*intercessor* means that He pleads our case to God. But how would we convince Him to go before the mighty God of all creation and vouch for us? By placing ourselves completely in His hands. By surrendering ourselves and all that we are to Him. It is then that He recommends us to God and our spirit is washed of that sin that we inherited from our human ancestors. We are then thoroughly healthy in spirit and have a powerful friend to help us in all things in our lives. And even with that, the best is yet to come.

GETTING A NEW BODY

It's true that being saved does not save us from physical health problems. We will still die. But when we die, we will be taken to a place of rest and comfort. We

won't have our bodies; that part of us that lives on, the real us, will be comforted and we will be with Jesus. But that isn't where it ends.

In 1 Corinthians 15:51-53, Paul gives us a little insight. "*Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality*." What's Paul saying? That when our Jesus comes back for us, our dead bodies will be raised and changed, but into what? They're going to put on - to acquire - incorruption (that's the opposite of decay) and immortality (that's the opposite of death - what put our bodies in their graves to begin with). Our bodies are going to become perfect and will live forever. We're going to put on new perfect bodies like pulling on a new suit. Don't think of wings and harps and halos. Our bodies will be anything but cartoonish. They will be us just as we feel like our current bodies are to us right now only more so. Nothing will have ever been as real as our new reality will then be.

We will have a body more perfect than that which God created for Adam because we will then be like Jesus. We will shine with the glory of God as Jesus shone to His disciples upon the Mount of Transfiguration (Mat 17:2). In Revelation 21, John had already been given a view of the end and was then being given a view of the new beginning. God's holy city had been placed upon the new earth and a great voice from heaven made the declaration "*Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. 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*."

This is the health that we should first acquire. It is then and only then that we will truly know health. And we will use that wonderful eternal vitality to forevermore praise the One who gave it.

In our next lesson, Wisdom.

LESSON THREE

WISDOM

LESSON TEXT
PROVERBS 9:10-11

WRITTEN BY
BROTHER DANNY HAYES

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

"*Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding*." (Proverbs 3:13)

We all want to be wise. We all want to be known as wise. But how do we acquire wisdom? There are probably as many, if not more, instructions on gaining wisdom than for anything else. Google the word wisdom and see what comes up. A plethora of links (almost 75 million at the time of this writing) comes, each touting or explaining wisdom, each often disagreeing with others around it. If you are searching for wisdom and how to get it, you may be left feeling confused and not knowing which way to go. Yet if you knew where wisdom came from, would that not be the first place to look? Now we have before us another search – to find the source of wisdom.

HUMAN WISDOM

"Follow your instincts. That's where true wisdom manifests itself" - Oprah Winfrey.

This is an example of the wisdom of men. Compare the quote from Ms. Winfrey to where our scripture text attributes the source of wisdom. They certainly are not in harmony. Which do you think is right? Let's see...one comes from a person who is famous for pretty much just being famous while the other comes from the creator of the universe. Wisdom comes from our instincts? Really? Do you know what our instincts are? Instincts are those things that are hardwired into our animal bodies.

But what if one person is hardwired for a large appetite and another is not. If they each follow their instincts at a feast, one will consume great quantities while one may only nibble. So is wisdom both ways? Is wisdom variable? Does wisdom depend upon the person? If that were true, wisdom would not be definable and it is. The Bible calls these instincts the lusts of the flesh and says that we should not give them free reign. With all the disparate opinions of what wisdom is, we know that they can't all be right, and so we may want to be discriminating in our search for

wisdom. We may well conclude that this quote is one that we can rule out.

But let's go on and look at more of what humans have to say about wisdom. Discuss these if you like. Talk about which may have some merit and which do not.

"Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise." - Benjamin Franklin

"Wisdom is knowing what to do next; Skill is knowing how to do it, and Virtue is doing it." - David Starr Jordan

"Memory is the mother of all wisdom." - Samuel Johnson

"A prudent question is one half of wisdom." - Francis Bacon

"The truest greatness lies in being kind, the truest wisdom in a happy mind." - Ella Wheeler Wilcox

"A wise person decides slowly but abides by these decisions." - Arthur Ashe

"We are made wise not by the recollection of our past, but by the responsibility for our future." - George Bernard Shaw

"Kindness is more important than wisdom, and the recognition of this is the beginning of wisdom." - Theodore Rubin (compare to verse 10 of our lesson text)

"Nine-tenths of wisdom consists in being wise in time." - Theodore Roosevelt

Confused yet? They kind of go all over the place don't they? How can they all claim to have wisdom and yet all be so different? Wouldn't true wisdom generate comments that were consistent in some manner? That could all be unified under a general wisdom "umbrella?" But these don't seem to fit that mold. One says the source of wisdom is going to bed and awakening early while another says that memory is the source. It's not even that they are opposites, but just...different. How can we reconcile them? Should we try to follow them all? We can't always do that either. Mr. Shaw says that we get wise by being responsible to our future while Ms. Winfrey says that we do by following our instincts. What if our instincts tell us to jump on our boss and beat him black and blue? That really wouldn't be acting with responsibility for our future, would it?

So when we really look at human wisdom, we are left wondering what wisdom actually is.

CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

Another type of human wisdom is not that which is dispensed by men of great learning or great fame, but by most folks around us. Conventional wisdom is that which is generally accepted by most people and more or less regarded as unquestionable truth. There's plenty of this type of wisdom floating around. You can hear it or the its implication in a lot of everyday conversations. People take certain things for granted. Go into a group of people on the street in any major city and talk about God creating the universe and most will look at you as if you're growing horns on the side of your head. But say something about evolution and no one will blink. That's because current conventional wisdom goes in the direction of evolution.

But here's the thing. Conventional wisdom hasn't always been the same. It changes. Here's another quote about wisdom:

"A man is wise with the wisdom of his time only, and ignorant with its ignorance. " Henry David Thoreau

In this quote, Thoreau may not have wisdom summed up, but he certainly has a point. Have you noticed that someone is always discovering something new that renders older knowledge obsolete? What did Europeans generally believe about the shape of the world before the end of the 15th century? They believed that the world was flat. If you had gone into a group of people in 1400 and started talking about the world being round, they'd have thought you were crazy. But after Christopher Columbus sailed to the New World and proved that the world was round, conventional wisdom changed.

So it's probably not a good idea to put too much stock in conventional wisdom. If you vest yourself in it, you may find yourself looking foolish, kind of like the folks who argued to their death that Earth was the center of the universe. So it seems that we've thrown out two kinds of wisdom that come from people. From this, we can probably rule out humans as the true source of wisdom.

The real problem with human wisdom is that it comes from, well...humans. While there have been some wise men over the course of history, humans as a whole have not always shown traces of smarts. Look at the totality of human folly. It's a rare individual that doesn't look at their high school yearbook years later and think (or say) "I can't believe I (you choose: wore my hair, wore a shirt, smiled, made a face) like that." We did it because it was the fashion of the time and because everybody else did it. Conventional wisdom is much the same. It follows the fashion of the day, and from a distance of years, we can't understand why we thought that way.

GOD'S WISDOM

A reasonable man might think that it would be better to follow the advice of the creator of humans than to try to sort out all of this stuff that comes from humans. In God we find one source instead of many. That alone would give us some consistency. But then when we begin to look at what He says, we begin to see real wisdom. For one thing, if we look in His word in 1 Corinthians 3:19, we find that it was already written what we have just discovered. "...*the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God*." So God agrees with us

that the wisdom of men both doesn't make sense and doesn't last.

But let's look a little further. The biblical book of Proverbs is the most concentrated place of God's wisdom in the Bible. We can glean much about God's view of wisdom there. Proverbs 2:6 clearly says that "*the LORD giveth wisdom*." Much of man's sayings about wisdom are different ways to get wisdom, but in God's word, there is only one way to get it – to receive it from God.

And how do we get it from Him? Look again at verse 10 of our scripture text. It says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Think about it...what type of attitude do we have toward someone that we truly fear. Would it not be one of humility? When we reach this attitude toward God, then we are ready to surrender to Him and ask for His help. We are in an attitude where we can be saved. This verse tells us that this is the beginning of wisdom. It is when we begin to see it God's way. When He saves us, God gives us more of His wisdom. It is not ours. We cannot boast about it. But we can partake of it. And from that time on, God can help us increase it.

Wisdom is something that we should never stop trying to increase. Forget about trying to discern what wisdom is. We've already established that wisdom is of God. Now we can and should pursue it as stated in Proverbs 4:7 - "*Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding*." Understand this first, that "*wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated*" (James 3:16). Its purity frees it from carnality, so any "wisdom" that seems to push toward the lusts of the flesh is not wisdom. It is not offensive, though many may find it so because it points to God. It is easy to apply to our lives when wisdom is what we really want. If we find ourselves lacking in it, we should "*ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him*." (James 1:5).

Finally, those who are saved can truly look forward to the day that they will partake of God's wisdom in a pure way, unhampered by the flesh that so often attempts to hold us back from the pursuit of Godly things. We will stand in the light of God's holy wisdom and we will know. We will understand. We will experience complete wisdom.

LESSON FOUR

FREEDOM

LESSON TEXT
John 8:32-36

WRITTEN BY
BROTHER DANNY HAYES

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

You can hear it on the radio, read it in books, watch programs and movies about it. The Statue of Liberty even bears a poem about it. People want to be free. Laws have been made, lives have been sacrificed, countries have been established, and wars have been waged with freedom as their desired ends. Petitions have been made for freedom. Fervent prayers have been moaned for freedom. We all want freedom. If we made a list of the top ten intangibles that we want in life. Freedom and liberty would surely be toward the top.

Yet do we really know what freedom is? Do we know what defines it? Do we know what limits it? Do we know where it comes from? Are there different kinds of freedom? If so, what kind do we want? What exactly is freedom?

FREEDOM

The definitions for freedom and liberty have many parts, but here are the ones that concern us for this lesson.

FREEDOM:
1: the quality or state of being free: as
a: the absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or action
b: liberation from slavery or restraint or from the power of another: independence
c: the quality or state of being exempt or released usually from something onerous <freedom from care>
d: unrestricted use <gave him the freedom of their home>
(www.merriam-webster.com)

In a political sense, we probably most often think of the second item describing freedom. In the United States, this issue is very important to us because this type of freedom is one of the foundation blocks of our country. "*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable*

Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." These are the words of the second sentence of our Declaration of Independence, a document whose ratification marked our beginnings as an independent nation. It was a new idea in human governance – that the basic rights of people are not doled out or denied by earthly rulers, but are given to us all, regardless of our nationality, by the great God of all creation.

The formation of this new order became a beacon to the world. Long before America was in a position to export this idea of freedom to other lands, it was a shining example of what a self-governed people could be. People flocked here from around the world, seeking a place where they could determine their own future. In 1883, the poet Emma Lazarus wrote a poem that summed up the sentiment of this country and its ideals. "The New Colossus" personifies Liberty, quoting her as saying "*Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free*..."

This definition of freedom is also important to Americans because that same sentence from our founding document, as well as our nation, underwent a fiery trial less than one hundred years later. The question was whether we really believed that those rights flowed from God. If we did, that would mean that we could not at the same time believe that any man had the right to own another human being against his/her will. That question was settled with the great pain and trauma of our Civil War, the result being that even as governments have no authority to enslave men, neither do other men. Even beyond that terrible event, there has been much strife in ensuring this freedom to all people in America, but it is truly a good work.

But the first item describing freedom is the one that we really want - the absence of a) necessity, b) coercion, or c) constraint in choice or action. We don't want to be made to do anything that's not our idea and we don't want to be kept from doing anything that is our idea. Now that's our idea of freedom. You hear it from time to time. "I don't see why people can't just do what they want to do." Isn't this the essence of complete and total freedom?

FREEDOM'S LIMITS?

Do we have complete and total freedom? Is it something that we should desire? Is it even possible?

Remember that complete freedom would be the total absence of coercion or constraint. That means that noone would make you do anything that you don't want to do. Do you have to stop at stop signs? Well, you're supposed to and the law is there to penalize you if you don't, so that's coercion. That alone makes our freedom less than complete, but there's more. Do you have to pay taxes? Do you have to go to school? Do you have to pay for things you get at a store? Do you have to do anything else that you wouldn't do if given a choice? Of course you do. We all do. That's a part of our lives that we accept.

Furthermore, can you do anything you want? Can you throw a rock through a store window? Can you assault a person? Can you break into a vending machine to get the goods and coins?

Some people might say "I can do all those things if I want to and choose a time when there is no one to stop me." Naturally, this is true, but doing these things as well as not doing the coerced things are against the law. In doing (or not doing) these things you risk being even more restrained in a jail cell. Even if you are not caught, you will probably need to avoid the places where you've performed your mischief and that is a constraint on your freedom.

But there are more problems with total freedom for all. If I am completely unconstrained and am walking down the sidewalk and there is a man standing where I want to walk, what do I do? If I walk around him, I've given up a little piece of my total freedom, meaning it isn't total anymore. Yet if I choose to knock that man out of the way, I've taken away the totality of his freedom. And then there's the problem of that man coming back at me and perhaps taking away more of my freedom with his fists. I only have total freedom if I can overcome everything. Even if he can't beat me, he's taken away my freedom of just walking down the street.

What would we humans do with the ability to be completely unrestrained? Look at the world around us right now. What are some of the things that people want? Sure people want good things that doesn't hurt anybody, but they also want things that cause conflict don't they? Look at all the conflict that exists in a world where we have rules imposed upon us. Think how it would be if we were all completely free to do anything we wanted. A good example of how it would be is to look at the animal kingdom. A saying often used to describe the animal kingdom is "kill or be killed." Have you ever seen one of those video clips of a lion and wildebeest? That's a picture of what human society would sometimes look like if there were absolutely no constraints upon anyone's freedom.

The problem is this: we are not morally equipped for total freedom. God, when saying that He would never again destroy the earth with water, said "...*the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth*." (Genesis 8:21) As long as man's heart is evil, there will be people who want what others have or who want to be where others are or who want to possess others for their purposes. As long as this condition exists, total freedom would mean some having freedom at the expense of the freedom of others and of course, this obliterates the concept of total freedom for all.

It's for this reason that we have law. Law is not an invention of man, although man has picked up the concept quite well. Many of man's laws recognize the fact that we are not perfect and are designed to protect the freedoms of an individual by limiting the freedoms of another.

How's that? For instance, by taking away the freedom of one man to kill another, the law protects the freedom of the other man to live.

God's law, on the other hand, is a golden standard of perfection. We can't achieve it, but its purpose is to hold us to that standard. The law is not necessarily there to try to get us to keep it, because if we did, we would be perfect and would have no need of it in the first place. True, if we try to use God's law as a guideline for living, it will put constraints on us, but that's only because we're not perfect and so our wants and desires are not in line with it.

So you see, being as we are from birth, we cannot hope to ever be truly free. It's an impossibility. We are in bondage. We cannot be truly free because we are not good and because we are thoroughly sinful by our natural inheritance as we talked about in lesson 2, we cannot be good. Are we trapped?

TRUE FREEDOM

No, by the mercy of God, we're not trapped. Take a look at this: "*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death*." (Romans 8:1-2) This is telling us that through Jesus we are freed from that sin that would otherwise trap us. Isaiah, in chapter 61, verse 1 prophesied "*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.*" Jesus made it clear that this was speaking of His mission here on earth.

Jesus came to proclaim liberty to the captives, and that's all of us! He came to free us of our inherent sin. How? By taking our sin upon Himself as He sacrificed His own perfect life to die with it upon His shoulders. He died with sin so that He could defeat it. When we feel the great weight of this sin that we carry, if we will humble ourselves and repent completely of the sin that is part of us, hating it and desiring that He take it away, He will exercise His complete power over our sin and wash it from our souls. From that time, there is truly no condemnation and we feel the freedom from the law of sin and death.

But that's not all. Our bodies are still sinful and we must struggle for the rest of our lives to keep them under the control of our new clean spirit, but Jesus and His Spirit is there to help us. We can feel the peace of that freedom that He has placed within and before us. But still, that's not all.

In Lesson 2 when we talked about getting a new, perfect body when Jesus returns for us? Well perfect health is not all that our new bodies will have. We finally will be perfectly equipped for total freedom. For one thing, we will be morally perfect. Unlike here, where we cannot be truly free because we are ravaged by sin, we will no longer have imperfect desires. Everything that we want will be good. There will be no need of a law from God which imposes His standard upon us. We and His perfect standard will be one! We will have no desire for anything that is not in total and complete harmony with God. We will be completely, totally unrestrained. We will be free to do anything that we want to do, but what we will want to do is God's will. We won't have to do anything we don't want to do, but in our perfection, the only things we won't want to do are those things incompatible with God.

For another thing, we will all be in complete harmony, unity, and complete communion *(more on this in lesson 5)*. In doing what we want to do, we will not conflict with anybody else, because we will all want the same thing: giving glory to God. We will all be as the 24 elders in Revelation 4 who "*fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.* (vv. 10-11)

We will finally know the definition of true and total freedom. In his "I Have A Dream" speech in 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. quoted a Negro spiritual in looking forward to a time that African-Americans would achieve equality in this country and used it to reference those terms. But the enslaved people who originally sang the song were not talking about a freedom here on earth. They sang a song that spoke of that perfect freedom that we've discussed.

Free at last, free at last
I thank God I'm free at last
Free at last, free at last
I thank God I'm free at last

Way down yonder in the graveyard walk
I thank God I'm free at last
Me and my Jesus going to meet and talk
I thank God I'm free at last

On my knees when the light pass'd by
I thank God I'm free at last
Tho't my soul would rise and fly
I thank God I'm free at last

Some of these mornings, bright and fair
I thank God I'm free at last
Goin' meet King Jesus in the air
I thank God I'm free at last

LESSON FIVE

PEACE & LOVE

LESSON TEXT
1 JOHN 4:10; ROMANS 5:1

WRITTEN BY
BROTHER DANNY HAYES

I John 4:10
10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Romans 5:1
1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

INTRODUCTION

Don't we all want peace and love? All of mankind has sought these two things since the beginning, but much has been made of them in recent decades. Since the 1960's, they have been elevated almost to a religion of their own. But what is peace? Do we really know love? Most people at least think they know them well enough to yearn for them, but is that what they are really yearning for? Let's look into these two concepts to see what they really are and are not, and to see if they can really be gained.

LOVE

As most people know it, love is an emotion of strong affection and personal attachment. We sometimes use the word "love" loosely, saying things like "I love pizza" or "I love it when the sun shines." There are many things and events that stir positive emotions within us, but we usually don't mean it the way we do when we tell someone dear to us "I love you." We are usually able, through the context of how the word is used, to determine the depth of feeling that is being conveyed. You might think that as many ways as we have to use the word, our language might have developed different words to gauge the degrees, but it has not. So we can love our wife, who is the love of our lives, and also love her hair. We can love the shows we watch and love to watch shows. We can look for love and we can die for love. We can give love and we can receive love. And we know that all's fair in love and war.

But which meaning are we looking for. Sure, most people love pizza, but that's probably not the love that everyone wants. To love another person and be loved by them in return, as in a marriage, can be a joyous thing, but there are many people who are content to live their lives without ever marrying, so it's not universal.

But think about love within a family unit. It's given, received, and enjoyed. It is comforting, rewarding, reassuring, nurturing, and strengthening. It's sometimes as if everyone in the home is emanating waves of love that everyone else absorbs, amplifies, and radiates back out. In a good loving home, nobody really doubts that they are loved. There is a profound connectedness among the members. They all have their places in the outside world. The children grow up and leave to make their own homes. But in that loving home, those who live or have lived there will always feel that the chain of their lives trace back to that anchor.

Isn't that the kind of love that we all want? Not just something that we feel, or give, or receive. Feelings wax and wane. Things we give are not always received as the precious things they are to us. We do not always appreciate the things we receive. But this type of love is different. It is a state of being. It's existence is not defined by it's being given or received. It simply is. It would surround us and bind us to each other.

Now in reality, do we experience that type of love in this world? We sometimes do on a small scale, perhaps among close friends, but it isn't all the time and it isn't universal. Sometimes even when talking to a good friend, we can sense a holding back. Sometimes it's us. The fact is that all people have differences. I may have a good friend who has voiced radically different religious beliefs than I hold. You may have a close friend that you know to have habits that you believe to be wrong. These things build walls between us. When these differences between people are in matters that to one or both are of great importance, they limit the connection that those people can have.

There have been those advocates of universal love who have said that we should allow none of these things to make barriers to love. But that would require at least one party to give up the things that they hold important. John Lennon was an outspoken advocate for love. He favored the idea of mankind throwing off religion. He seemed to think that my religious beliefs keep me from loving all people. But he also said "I believe in what I do, and I'll say it." So in his mind, he was allowed to keep his strong beliefs. It was everybody else that was preventing universal love.

But we can agree with Mr. Lennon that for universal love to exist, everybody must be on the same page. Can that happen? Not on this earth. Remember the sin thing that man brought into the world? That's the reason we can't all get together. The sin that is in us all makes us self-willed and headstrong. We will bow down to nobody. At least that's our general attitude. Look at a small child. What's one of the first words they learn to use really well? "No!" It belies a general attitude of defiance on our part. Defiance to whom? Mom and Dad, teachers, other people, everybody. We are not only ill-equipped for universal love, we are very well equipped for division.

Let's not continue down this road with love. It seems we're getting the picture...let's look now at peace.

PEACE

Peace describes a society or a relationship that is operating harmoniously and without violent conflict. Peace is commonly understood as "the absence of hostility; or the existence of healthy or newly healed interpersonal or international relationships; safety in matters of social or economic welfare; the acknowledgment of equality and fairness in political relationships." (www.Wikipedia.org)

At the risk of being depressing as well as repetitive, all the problems that we've outlined with universal love are also there for peace. As long as people have differences, there will be strongly held beliefs and opinions which cause conflict among us.

Conflict, no matter how small, eradicates complete peace by its very existence, whether it is open conflict or left completely unspoken. The first of the definitions above says that peace in a society is when there is no violent conflict. We accept this. It is good to live in a society where the conflicts are either settled in a non-violent manner or are not pursued for the sake of the society itself. But it is not true peace.

Our country was a very peaceful place overall just 60 years ago. There was little open violent conflict and dissent was usually expressed in a civil manner. But there was hostility simmering under the lid of it all, some of it justified, some of it not. When what some people considered injustice reached an intolerable level, the hostility boiled over. This is not used to make a judgment on the past. Only to point to an example that this world is not a peaceful place. A peaceful place would be be such that there would be no hostility to boil over. We can never live in this world with the assurance that peace will not be shattered by conflict of one type or another.

Look at the second sentence of the above definition. Can you honestly say that you experience a complete absence of hostility in everything in your life? Is every relationship that you have ever had healthy or if not have they all been healed? It would be a rare and lonely individual that could say this. Rare because it's pretty much unheard of and lonely because it would probably involve not having any relationships.

So if you've been paying attention to the last four lessons, you can probably guess that our conclusion is that we simply don't get to taste peace and love to their fullest while here on earth.

REAL PEACE AND LOVE

Yet we do have hope of these things if we know Jesus. You see, true peace and love are not an end unto themselves. They are both outgrowths of a relationship with Him. Remember when Jesus was born and the angels appeared to the shepherds? The praise that they gave in the sight of the shepherds was "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men*." (Luke 2:14) This verse is used at Christmas to talk about the ending of wars and fellowship between all people everywhere.

Yet it has been 2000 years since Jesus was born and in all that time, have wars ceased? Has mankind become a worldwide brotherhood? We should be wary of such interpretations. It's not that world peace and brotherhood between man would not be a wonderful thing. But we know that angels speak the truth of God and that God does not lie, so we can assume that this is not what they were talking about. Worldly peace is specifically what Jesus Himself said was not the reason for His coming into the world. In Mattew 10:34-36, He said "*Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household*." So what were the angels saying? That here on earth, a way had been made for man to have peace through the good will of God toward him. Peace? But we just said that there is no world peace. It is peace with God.

Think about that. God has power over everything. His will becomes reality. Even if the entire world fights and rails against us, if we have peace with Him, we have peace indeed. As Jesus stilled the stormy Sea of Galilee by simply saying "*Peace, be still*" (Mark 4:39), He can also reach down inside us and still the tempests of our soul. Saved people can recall the first time that Jesus stilled their spirit when He saw the great trouble of their soul and their repentance to Him. But it is still a blessing when trouble comes upon us and we seek Him, that we feel Him say to our heart "Peace, be still." Jesus is not like other men. When a person says something like that to you, it is but a well-wishing sentiment. But when Jesus says it, it is a command, whether to a sea, or to our soul. Whatever it is that He speaks to then obeys, and there is peace. So finally, "*being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Romans 5:1).

SO HAPPY TOGETHER

As we've discussed several times in these lessons, everything will be made right when Jesus finally returns to gather His people unto Himself. Very truly, "*Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed*." (Isaiah 40:4-5) There will be peace as man has never known because we will have the peace with God in spirit that He gave us while we lived on Earth, but there will finally be peace and brotherhood among men.

A condition of perfect peace among men can only exist if they are of one mind and when the saints are with God, that will be true of all of us. As we stated in earlier lessons, we will be different than we are here. God's will and the will of every one of us will be exactly the same. We will be

of one mind, perhaps literally rather than figuratively. We will not be each going his own way, seeking his own desires. We will all have the same desire. We will desire to worship and praise Him who made us this way. When one raises a praise to God, the rest will rejoice for the glory being given to our mighty God. Nobody will be jealous of anybody else, nobody will want what anyone else has, because we will all be focused away from ourselves and completely focused upon Him.

And love will have made it all possible. Because of God's love for us, Jesus came and though completely undeserving of death, died to complete the plan that will allow us to be with God forever. And there is where we will experience perfect love, as nothing we've every known. God's love will surround us. We will reflect that love back to Him and to each other. As with the love in a loving home but to an infinitely higher degree, the love in that place will be a state of being. It will be like the air that we breathe today. And we will take it in and exhale it without it ever becoming stale, for God will be the endless source. "*then shall I know even as also I am known.*"
(1 Corinthians 13:12)

Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. (Psalms 37:4)

Complete communion, one-ness, peace, contentment, love, togetherness, wisdom, freedom, vigor, vitality, security. Aren't these the things that everyone wants? We hope that we have shown with these lessons what they are really all about. That the key to all of them is knowing God through His salvation. The theme for this series of lessons is Pearls of Great Price, relating to the parable that Jesus told in Matthew 13:45-46. In it, He told of a merchant who found a single pearl that was exactly what he wanted and very costly. His response was to sell everything that he had in order to buy that pearl. When he had finished with his transactions, the pearl was all he had left, but it was also all he wanted.

Our prayer is that you will see that everything you ever really wanted is in Jesus and that you will seek Him. It will only cost you everything. You'll have to turn your back upon everything, all that you have, all that you are, everything. But what is all of that when Jesus is, and has, everything that you really want?

When you've found Him, you will just begin to see that all that you need is in Him. You will still have work, troubles, and worries in this world, but you will also have the best friend that you could have. And when you leave this life with that pearl of salvation, you will not have lost anything, but will have gained it all.