

# Called by Grace to a Life of Love

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## Chapter 1 – The Old Testament Drama

### Scripture for Study: Romans 1:18-32; Psalm 119:33-40

*Do you feel that you know what the message of the Old Testament is?*

This will be the first in a series of studies in stewardship. Usually stewardship implies money, but that will be only part of what we shall be considering. Actually all we will be saying has to do with a believer's relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. We understand the truth of the Gospel was expressed by Paul when he said:

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20).

We shall be studying what it means to have "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Stewardship occurs in the life of a believer in Christ. It originates in the response of that person to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To understand stewardship it is important to understand the nature of the Gospel. For this we turn to the Bible which we hold as Scripture, which God has inspired and which is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

The Bible presents the account of God's dealing with men. The central fact in the Bible is that God sent His Son to save a multitude of God's creatures, that He might throughout eternity be the Firstborn among many brethren. The climax of this account was the incarnation of the Son of God in Jesus of Nazareth, who came to die that men might be saved. In preparation for His coming God had dealings with men as recorded in the Old Testament. The fulfillment of the promises of God occurred in the Person of Jesus Christ who projected the Gospel into the world as recorded in the New Testament.

Our first study will consider the Old Testament. When we read the story of the creation of man we note that the one requirement laid upon man was obedience to the will of God. This was illustrated in "the separated portion", when the tree with the forbidden fruit was put in the midst of the garden and man was commanded not to eat thereof. It was at the point where Adam and Eve wanted to act in their own judgment that they sinned. We can feel they were wrong when we compare their action with that of Jesus of Nazareth, Who could say "I do always the things that please my Father." Here we see the essence of sin.

Sin is disobedience to the will of God. There is no outline of acceptable conduct set forth in the Old Testament, as to what man was expected to do. There is no description of how man should act. The whole garden was for man to use as he wanted to, but there was one tree placed within reach of man, about which Adam was instructed not to eat thereof. There was no explanation, no argument, simply this one commandment: "No, not that one." This commandment Adam disobeyed. In so doing he sinned in a way that infected and polluted natural man to this very day.

In His kindness God gave man evidence of His grace. Now that man knew good and evil he could be expected to obey God according to his conscience. But this man failed to do. God brought in the flood to show man the reality of His judgment.

After the flood God called Abraham to receive blessing because of his faith. God promised Abraham

that he would have a countless number of descendants who would be blessed of God. Abraham was told that his descendants would live in bondage about 400 years but would then be delivered. This promise was fulfilled under Moses. As the children of Israel were brought out of Egypt in the exodus, they were given the Ten Commandments as a guide for qualifying for blessing.

Because they failed to obey God the children of Israel spent 38 unnecessary years of wandering in the desert. After they entered the land under Moses and Joshua they lived in tribal fashion for about 400 years. During this time again and again they became careless and disobedient. God chastened them by letting the Canaanites enslave them from time to time. In mercy God sent judges who preached the law of God and led the tribes in repentance and ultimate deliverance.

But Israel fell into sin again and again. Finally Israel was given a king who was to lead the people in obedience to God. But even then the people were disobedient. They were influenced by their pagan neighbors to worship pagan idols. God sent prophets to warn Israel that God would not tolerate such disobedience. Because Israel was incorrigible, God announced that He would destroy the nation.

But God now promised that He would do something new and different. Instead of looking to Israel to be righteous by their own choice, God would operate under a New Covenant. He would provide a righteousness that would be given to the remnant who were the true believers who repented of their sins. God would forgive the remnant and receive them to Himself. He would give them a righteousness which He had prepared for them, and which they could not lose. He would do all this through His righteous Servant Messiah or Christ.

Peter reveals that the prophets searched diligently to know what the Spirit of Christ that was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. This New Covenant was activated in Jesus of Nazareth who lived righteously, and who would share His righteousness with any who believed in Him. This is our Gospel today. The operation of this Gospel by the working of the Holy Spirit brings "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Christ Himself is righteous, and He living in the believer moves the believer into obedience to God. This obedience spiritually generated leads the believer into acting in line with the will of the Son of God. This is not the case of a good well-intentioned man living and working to do God's will, but this is Christ living in the believing soul, serving His Father: "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." The glory of such living belongs to God. He will not give that glory to anybody else.

Paul expounds in Romans 5:12-21 how this remarkable work of grace is done by Christ Jesus. Paul's own description of how it worked in his own case is clear as we read in Galatians 2:20 when Paul writes: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

So as we think of the whole Old Testament record we are having in mind that man, God's creature, did not obey God. Man was not able to obey God even with God's help. God then undertook a new plan. God promised a new thing which is called the New Covenant in the Old Testament. It is called the New Covenant in the New Testament. The basis of what we commonly call the New Testament is this New Covenant. This can be very simply understood in this way: what man could not and would not do in his own incorrigible sinfulness, Almighty God did graciously in His Son Jesus Christ. God provides it as a garment to be put on persons who believe in Christ Jesus. As we come out of a look at the Old Testament we do so with the feeling man has failed, but God has promised a new thing.

For study and for discussion, I would suggest the following questions:

1. Can you see why it was necessary that the tree with the forbidden fruit should be in the midst of the garden within reach of Adam?
2. What does the history of God's prolonged forbearance with Israel in the light of their repeated disobedience show about God?
3. What does the flood reveal about the will of God toward His creation?
4. What does the promise of the New Covenant in Christ show about God's grace?

5. Paul writes of Christ being the second Adam. How does this affect the regenerated believer in Christ?
6. What does Romans 1:21-27 reveal as to the origin of pagan religion and social practices?

## **Chapter 2 – The New Testament: The Promises Fulfilled**

**Scripture for Study: John 14:8-11; Matthew 4:1-11; 5:43-48; Romans 8:3-4, 28-29**

*Can you see how it would make a difference if Christ were in a man's heart directing his activities?*

We are continuing in our study of stewardship in the Bible. Stewardship is to be seen as obedience to the indwelling Christ.

In this study our attention is focused upon the New Testament as it was shown forth in Jesus of Nazareth. It is very important to recognize that Jesus of Nazareth was always eternally the Son of God even when in human form. He was made in all points as we are, yet without sin. He was found in fashion as a man so that one can say His form was truly human; but it should be remembered that He was *not only* human. Jesus of Nazareth was not a child of Adam. He was the Son of God.

Jesus of Nazareth obeyed His father perfectly. He could do this because He was without sin. No human being conceived in iniquity and born in sin could ever imitate Jesus Christ. It is commonly understood that the beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-12 describe characteristics of living that God would approve. These were shown to Israel in Old Testament times. But there is no directive from Jesus of Nazareth that any human being should aim to live in this way. No sinful child of Adam ever could live like this. True this is what God would approve, and this is how Jesus of Nazareth lived, of whom the Father said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

Jesus of Nazareth taught "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." The glory of Solomon was put on him. The beauty of the lily came from the inside out. And so it must always be to please God.

As Jesus of Nazareth taught, Nicodemus could well be puzzled with the problem, "How can these things be?" He received a straightforward categorical reply, "Ye must be born again." This truth was restated, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." In emphasis Jesus of Nazareth put the truth beyond question, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

The testimony of Scripture is plain. The first Adam failed to obey God and was condemned to destruction. The second Adam was the Lord from heaven who always did all things to please His Father. It is He, Christ Jesus, who lives in the believer, and shares His righteousness, Christ's righteousness, to make the believer acceptable to God. In John 14:8-11 Jesus of Nazareth taught "the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." In these words He seems to make it clear that it was not in Himself that the power to live as He lived existed. It was in God the Father. This gives a clue to understand spiritual living as in a believer. It will not be as from the believer himself. It will be "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

In Matthew 4:1-11 is the record of the first big battle Jesus of Nazareth faced as He began His public service as the Christ the Son of God. Satan is revealed as the malignant enemy who seeks to destroy the work of God. Satan did this successfully with the first man, as we read in Genesis 3:1-24. But now that the Lord from heaven came as the second Man, Satan tried again. He was defeated.

In I John 2:16 we read of the three avenues along which sin moves: the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. This is exactly the way Eve was tempted. The forbidden fruit was good for

food, and it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise. Along the same three avenues Satan, the tempter, approached Jesus of Nazareth.

Here again Satan opened the temptation with a question, "If thou be the Son of God" and proceeded in the classic pattern. First, the lust of the flesh. Jesus was hungry after His fast. "Command this stone that it be made bread." The Son of God answered, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone." Of course man does live by bread, but not only by bread. His physical body lives by bread, but there is more to a man than his body: man has a spirit. And the spirit lives by the Word of God. When the interest of the body and the interest of the spirit conflict, the interest of the spirit must prevail. Paul referred to this in Galatians 5:16-18.

The other two temptations with which Satan confronted Jesus of Nazareth completed the full round of all temptations that would lead a person into disobeying the will of God. In all temptation the appeal is to the self. Whereas the very essence of the will of God was expressed by Jesus of Nazareth in these words: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself" (Luke 9:23).

The Scriptures reveal the Son of God is the Word of God. Thus in the incarnation of the Son of God, the Word was made flesh, so that Jesus of Nazareth was the embodiment of the Word of God. The Scriptures reveal that God created all men, and that God cares about all men since they are His creation. God's care for all men can be seen in the processes of nature. Thus in Matthew 5:43-48 Jesus of Nazareth taught that believers should manifest a benevolent attitude toward all men because this was God's attitude. And Paul pointed out that believers should bear the image of the heavenly. If God would act in a certain way, the believer would act that way (I Corinthians 15:49). Such behavior on the part of the believer is not an achievement of human effort. This would be the result of having "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

In Romans 8:3-4 Paul points out clearly that even with the law, the Ten Commandments, in hand, human beings could not do God's will because of the weakness of the flesh. Therefore God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, in the incarnation, that He might die for sin. Christ then made it possible by His resurrection that those who believed in Him might be raised from the dead, being born again into the newness of life. Paul points out in Galatians 4:4-6 that Christ died to redeem believers into the adoption of being the sons of God: to these God sent forth His Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was not sent into every person on the face of the earth, only into the sons of God, the born again believers. It was to these that Paul wrote Romans 8:4 and Galatians 4:5-6, as well as Colossians 1:27. Paul counted himself to be one of those in Galatians 2:20.

These are the believers referred to in Romans 8:28-30. These are they who are predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son. This by no means refers to all mankind nor even to all in any one nation, or to any one company of people. These are they who have entered into the strait gate and have come along the narrow way of which the Lord said "Few there be that find it."

The sum of the matter that we have been considering in these first two sessions is first, God created the heaven and the earth and put all men in charge that His Son might be the Firstborn among many brethren. Second, man yielded to temptation, falling into sin and became incorrigibly selfish. Third, by His grace God called Abraham to a life of obedience and promised that in his seed all people should be blessed. Fourth, despite being given the law of God to guide them and the ministry of the prophets to warn them, the flesh descendants of Abraham, known as Israel, were so incorrigible that God revealed a New Covenant and sent His chosen Servant the Messiah, Christ, to bring a multitude of redeemed into fulfillment of His promise to Abraham and for His own glory. Fifth, these redeemed were the remnant of the children of Israel and the Gentiles, who responded to His call to repentance and to faith in Christ. These are related to Christ as members of His body and are known as the Church. Their citizenship is in heaven and they live on earth as strangers and pilgrims. Sixth, during the time such members of His body live in this world, they will seek to glorify God by living and acting as they are led by their Head, the living Lord Jesus Christ. They know that this world lies in the lap of the evil one and that its destiny is to

be destroyed at the return of their Lord Jesus Christ, II Thessalonians 1:7-10 and II Peter 3:1-13. And they are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. Seventh, the very essence of stewardship for the believer in Christ is expressed in Hebrews 10:5-7. Just as a body was prepared for the Son of God in the flesh of Jesus of Nazareth, and He used that body to do the will of His Father on Calvary's cross, Matthew 26:39-42, so the believer accepts every situation and every item within his control as an assignment from his heavenly Father about which he must be faithful as a steward.

And now I have put together some questions for study and discussion.

1. What truth can we see in John 18:36, "My kingdom is not of this world?"
2. What bearing upon a believer's activity is to be found in John 20:21?
3. What lessons can we learn about guidance for a believer in Acts 1:7-8 and John 21:21-22?

## **Chapter 3 – Faith and Works**

### **Scripture for Study: Matthew 7:15-27; Romans 6; Ephesians 2:1-10**

*Do you understand what is meant by faith and works?*

In our study of stewardship we should keep in mind that we are thinking of the believer in Christ. Stewardship is not a practical plan for the unbelieving public. This means that there are several basic elements in the idea. The believer has a relationship with God in which the believer has accepted God's invitation to commit himself to Jesus Christ in order that he would receive eternal life. Before accepting this offer he was a sinner doomed to destruction because of his sin. The invitation offered forgiveness and a new life in Christ. Now that he is a believer, he is no longer his own. He has become a member of the Body of Christ. He is directed in his activity by his Head, Jesus Christ. This relationship is much more demanding than commonly recognized.

There is no such thing as the believer deciding whether he will or whether he will not do anything to please the Lord. He is not separate from the Lord. The believer is in the Body, and the Lord is in him. The believer has no mind of his own. He does not own anything as his own. He holds all things that are in his possession in trust for his living Lord. This is not because he is a devoted follower. This is because he is a part of Christ's Body.

It is true that while he lives in his human body in this world the believer will have his own human nature, which Paul calls the flesh. He has his own natural mind and he lives in the natural world where he deals with other natural persons about natural things. Others call him by his human name. But the people on the outside do not understand that what the believer does naturally in human fashion is actually controlled from within spiritually by the Lord.

Such yieldedness may not be perfect. Time and again his human nature may gain the upper hand and the believer may act selfishly. When he does this we call it carnal behavior, and we count that as sin. But we do not try to develop stewardship for the carnal nature. Stewardship is the procedure by which the believer handles things in this world that have been entrusted to him by his Lord. Paul described himself thus:

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20).

When Paul said "I am crucified with Christ", he was referring to his spiritual relationship with the

Lord. "Nevertheless I live" in this world, in this town, in this city where I am: that is where I am living. "Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" right while I am on the very street I am on, and in the very house I live, Christ lives in me. "And the life which I now live in the flesh" where I am in the community where neighbors know me by my name, and where I meet with them, and so on: the life I now live in the flesh "I live by the faith of the Son of God." The decisions I make, the things that I choose, the places where I go, the things that I do, I do because of the faith that I have in Jesus Christ "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

This third study is to examine the operation of faith and works. It is important to define these words carefully. Faith as an exercise of consciousness has no classic meaning of its own. What I mean by that is you can use the word "faith" in many different ways. The Hindu woman who throws her baby into the Ganges River is exercising faith but not at all the kind of faith that a soul has that accepts Christ. Faith is like swallowing. At times people might say swallowing can keep a body alive, but it is not the swallowing that keeps the body alive, it is the food that it swallows. At that point one can have in mind that you could swallow poison; and if you swallowed poison, you would die. So with reference to faith. You can have faith in God and faith in Christ Jesus, according to the Scripture: this would save the soul. But you could have faith in other things: faith in worldly things; and faith in other ideas, that would actually lead you into destruction. The faith that saves my soul is my faith in the death of Christ Jesus on the cross for my sins.

Some try to qualify for the blessing of God by doing good works as a sort of payment. Paul wrote to the Galatians that circumcision was a good work, but it would not qualify them before God. They would need to commit themselves to Jesus Christ by faith. Such faith would involve committing the soul to obey the Lord. Obeying the Lord would result in good works to the glory of His name. In thinking of a soul being saved it is not a matter of faith or works; it is not even a matter of faith and works; but it is faith that works. That is the faith that counts.

In Matthew 7:15-27 Jesus of Nazareth taught plainly that there are some who would observe certain ceremonial acts, and perform certain religious actions in order to be accepted by God, when actually what God wanted was heartfelt obedience to His guidance. It will be helpful here to note John 6:28-29 where we read, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."

In Romans 6 Paul discusses at length the spiritual transformation that takes place in the soul that believes in Jesus Christ. The sinner identifies with Jesus Christ, doing this by faith. The believer trusts in Him. He commits himself to Him. In being crucified with Christ the believer dies unto self and all his sinful habits and desires. In being raised from the dead in the resurrection of Jesus Christ the believer now has a new life which is free from sin. Romans 6:22-23 summarizes this whole event:

But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:22-23).

In Ephesians 2:1-10 Paul describes in more detail the spiritual event of being raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. This is the work of God by His power and His grace, and it results in the believer being now incorporated in the Body of Jesus Christ. This whole operation prepares the believer to serve God as he lives as a member of the Body of Christ. Thus Paul writes in Ephesians 2:10: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

You will notice that we are attached to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith, and because we are identified with Him by faith we count we are crucified with Him. Believing in Him we count we are raised from the dead in Him. Now we belong to the Lord, and then God gives us the Holy Spirit to work in our heart. God does all this Himself. You and I do not have to plan it out. It is actually done for us. God does it for us,

and we are His workmanship. We who believe are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

Let us keep in mind this does not mean that a person figures out what those good works are and then goes out and does them. That is not the idea. The believer looks up into the face of the Lord Jesus Christ, becoming conscious of His presence, and asks Him, "What do you want me to do? What wilt thou have me to do?" Then he does that. That will be a good work.

But no discussion of faith and works as revealed in the New Testament would be complete without noting what James has written in his epistle. Some students are inclined to contrast Paul and James as though they were endorsing different views as to how a soul is saved. But this is unnecessary. Paul wrote to the Galatians to insist that the soul is acceptable to God through faith quite apart from any religious practices as works. But James wrote his epistle to emphasize that the faith which qualifies a soul before God is a faith that works. There can be no doubt at all that saving faith is an obedience to God, that it results in doing the good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

And now while you are thinking about this line of thought, I have prepared some questions for study and discussion.

1. Show how infant baptism among Presbyterians could be as much a snare as circumcision was among the Galatians.
2. Can you see how certain customary church activities could mislead some to a false assurance of being right with God as in Matthew 7:12-23?
3. Could you list some of the good works that you feel God has before ordained that you should walk in them?
4. In the light of James 2:21-23 what in your own experience would be the fulfillment of the Scripture that you have in mind, "Whosoever believeth in him, hath everlasting life"?

## **Chapter 4 – The Physical and the Spiritual**

### **Scripture for Study: Genesis 1:31; 2:7-9; Matthew 6:24-33**

*Do you feel that you understand what the word "spiritual" means?*

Definition of the terms we use is very important. The way we use these terms gives them the meaning that they have. The word "physical" is used very little in Scripture. But the word "natural" is commonly used. Paul uses the terms "natural" and "spiritual" as well as "earthly" and "heavenly" in I Corinthians 15:44-50. In this context Paul asserts "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." (I Corinthians 15:50). In this context he seems to equate "flesh and blood" with "corruption."

There is no question that the Scripture reveals that as God created the natural world, it was good. When He had completed His creation, including man, He pronounced it very good. The creation of man is detailed to show the origin of body, spirit and soul, all of which are to be seen as natural or created. What the world would have been like had man obeyed God and had not eaten the forbidden fruit we cannot imagine, but this was not to be. Man was warned that if he disobeyed God and ate the forbidden fruit he would surely die.

In Genesis 3 the sad story is told. Mankind never had the opportunity to live in the setting of the original creation. Sin entered into the world and death by sin. The whole man, body, soul and spirit, became sinful, doomed to destruction by death. This is the biblical revelation of the plight of man. The

Bible speaks of man as lost; and presents the Gospel that the Son of Man came into the world to seek and to save the lost.

In the incarnation God sent forth His Son to be made in the likeness of man, yet without sin (Galatians 4:4-5). Jesus of Nazareth was born of a virgin. Thus He was not a child of Adam but a child of God. We may note that while His body was made in all points like as we are, it was not the same as ours since it was without sin. The Scripture records that He was made in the likeness of men. But this does not imply that He was entirely and only man. The Scriptures also record that man was created in the likeness of God but this does not mean that man was made God.

The Son of God was eternally the Son of God, even when He was in the form of Jesus of Nazareth. The well-known description of Christ Jesus as "very God of very God and very man of very man" is not a biblical phrase. It comes out of the culture of the church in history. While He was walking on earth as Jesus of Nazareth He was the Son of God. For one brief moment on the Mount of Transfiguration the truth was revealed, as is seen in Matthew 17:1-8. When He died for me on Calvary it was the Son of God who died, an event the angels desire to look into.

It has been pointed out that the Bible does not separate the physical and the spiritual in the nature of man. It presents the whole man as created in Genesis 2:7-9 as one person, and that is the person that was lost. Paul has that whole person in mind when he writes of the flesh and of the carnal. Language almost fails us at this point, but if we move slowly and take note of what Paul said we may avoid confusion. Man was created body, spirit and soul which is to be identified as natural. When a person is born again, regenerated by the Word of God in the Gospel, he is a new creation. Paul wrote, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (and that means 'creation'): old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Corinthians 5:17). This new man is to be identified as spiritual. So we have the classic confrontation of "natural", which was the person as he was born of the flesh; and "spiritual", as the person is born of the Holy Spirit. The natural is the child of Adam being of the flesh, the spiritual is the child of God being of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit. Paul would speak of the natural as flesh and blood, saying about him "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God."

What tends to confuse us is that "flesh and blood" has body, soul and spirit. Some of the distinction between natural and spiritual can be felt in I Corinthians 2:7-16. The natural man has ambitiously produced great achievements in art, in science, in philosophy, even in religion, as one can see all over the world. But the natural man did not recognize Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, the Son of God. Rather he crucified Him, even as he does to this day, and he would certainly not "first seek the kingdom of God" as Jesus of Nazareth taught should be done.

But any discussion of this phase of understanding the Gospel would be too limited if we avoid noting how Paul uses the term "flesh and Spirit." In Romans 6 Paul expounds the significance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ for the believer. Being crucified with Christ and buried with Him in baptism the believer can reckon by faith his old man, his human nature, his flesh, to be buried with Christ while his new man, his "born again", his "new creation", can be reckoned by faith to be risen with Christ and living in newness of life. It is because the flesh is reckoned dead that the believer can count himself free from sin and can count himself to be a servant of God. It is as such that the believer will inwardly practice stewardship.

In Romans 8 Paul expounds the operation of the Holy Spirit in the life of the born again believer. He distinguishes the person who walks after the flesh from the person who walks after the Spirit. He designates the first as carnally minded whose end is death, and the second as spiritually minded whose end is life and peace. At this point Paul is emphatically saying "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." He goes on to write: "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

We do well to remind ourselves that the Holy Spirit was sent forth by the Father only into those who are born again, the sons of God. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that our mortal bodies, our human



natures, are quickened, made alive, and thus enabled to respond to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our stewardship. No matter how much of what I have in my hand could be used by me to please myself, the Holy Spirit within me directs me and makes me use it to please the Lord by doing His will. Paul goes on to point out that within our limitations we might not know even what to pray for but the Spirit helpeth our infirmities and prays for us that we may get the blessing we need (Romans 8:26-27).

In Galatians 5:16-18 Paul recognizes the conflict within the believer's consciousness because he still has flesh and blood in his physical being even while he has the Holy Spirit indwelling his newborn being. Several years ago I was lecturing in Taiwan to a group of native pastors. I was teaching about this very truth of the two natures within the personality of the believer. A question was raised by an astute listener. The question was this: If the believer has in him these two contrary principles, how can he avoid tension, how can he ever have peace, the peace of God that passeth all understanding? In answering I drew their attention to a common sight in the field, a boy riding on a water buffalo, guiding him. I pointed out that the boy and the water buffalo have contrary ideas about what to do. If the buffalo were on the boy, there would be no peace but as long as the boy is on the buffalo, there can be peace.

In considering this whole line of thought of the physical and the Spiritual, I am proposing certain questions that will help us in our study.

1. How important is the physical body to enable us to have communion and fellowship with each other?
2. In the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-37, what part did the physical aspect have in what happened?
3. How did James use the physical to demonstrate about faith as in James 2:14-17?
4. How did John use the physical to teach about love as in I John 3:16-18?

## **Chapter 5 – Love For God – Love For Thy Neighbor**

**Scripture for Study: Isaiah 1:10-17; Micah 6:6-8; Isaiah 58:1-9; Matthew 25:31-46; Mark 12:28-34; Galatians 5:14; I John 4:20-21**

*Do you realize that each person has a personal responsibility to every other person he meets?*

When I had the privilege of teaching Bible and Christian Education in a seminary for 27 years, I tried to help my students to understand the power of the Gospel of Christ. I believed that the Bible was the Word of God and that the Word of God had power to save the soul of whosoever would believe in and obey Jesus Christ. In seeking to illustrate the operation of power I studied what I could find about the scientific description of power.

I found that electric power always moves in a straight line and that it emits vectors of power at right angles, always at right angles to its course. Thus on an impulse of power on an axis from south to north there would be vectors of power emitted going east and west, thus a perpendicular axis of power impulse would generate a horizontal axis of power almost as strong.

It is commonly understood that the first great commandment is "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God", and the second is like unto it "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." In discussing this with my students I would draw the diagram of this truth on the blackboard showing the perpendicular axis, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God" that goes straight up. Then the horizontal axis "Thou shalt love thy neighbor" that goes as wide as it can go. It would be plainly seen that this is the cross, our symbol of the Gospel.

Then I would preach to my students telling them "If you teach only the doctrine and the theology of the

Gospel, you will have the perpendicular, upright as a telephone pole. But that is not the cross, that is not the Gospel. And if you preach only the horizontal social implications of the Gospel in the believer's mission to love his fellow man without sustaining this with the perpendicular love toward God in Christ, you will have a crossbar lying on the ground where it will become wormeaten. This also is not the Gospel. No doubt many have preached and taught only religious doctrine and custom; but this was never the biblical position. So even today no doubt there are such as teach a philosophy of social emphases to the point that they imply that any human being can be blessed of God if he or she will only seek their neighbor's welfare. This can be done claiming Jesus of Nazareth as example and teacher.

But we must be very careful to remember that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The essential truth in all of this is you must be born again. The only person who ever fulfilled the law was Jesus of Nazareth. The only hope any human being can ever have of being acceptable to God in a heartfelt purpose to obey is to have "Christ in you, the hope of glory." God will not give that glory to anyone else. All the revelation in Scripture that shows how God demands that love toward Himself be fulfilled in love toward thy neighbor, simply sets forth the requirements of righteousness that only His righteous Servant, the Messiah, the Christ, could or ever did fulfill. This is what Jesus Christ did.

It is this righteousness that He shares with the members of His body by the operation of the Holy Spirit in them. As the prophets preached the requirement of the law of God in Old Testament times, they preached condemnation to Israel. The Jews were not obeying the first commandment, but this was an inner personal condition no one could detect on the outside. However when they failed to obey the second great commandment their failure to act justly, to live humbly, to serve in humble charity was obvious, and could be pointed out by the prophets. The prophets did not specify social injustice and moral transgressions because such actions were the most important but because they were the only obvious evidence by which the preaching could induce conviction of sin, and lead to repentance.

Certainly the Bible teaches "Thou shalt love thy neighbor", but this is the second great commandment like unto the first. It comes out of the first as a vector in every true situation of relationship with God. The first commandment is "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." In Isaiah 1:10-17 the prophet reveals that God will not accept outward religious ritual practices performed superficially by hearts that are far from Him personally. God is disgusted with such behavior. We are reminded of the words of the glorified Christ Jesus to His church at Laodicea, when He accused that church of being lukewarm, as in Revelation 3:14-19.

But when the prophet would preach to induce repentance he mentioned such violations of the second commandment as could be seen and which would prick their conscience. In Isaiah 58:1-9 the prophet reveals the sin of the house of Jacob. Apparently they were very religious and made a big show of their ritual practices, but they did not come with broken hearts. Their violation of the first commandment could not be proven by any prophet or preacher. However, the evidence that they had violated the second commandment could be seen and pointed out in their treatment of the poor, the guilty, the hungry and the naked. So the prophet having drawn attention to their overt sins presses the people of God to repent and to forsake their sinful practices.

About the only obvious breach of the first commandment was their failing to hallow the Sabbath day and the prophet urges them to correct that. In Micah 6:6-8 the same pattern of procedure is followed. The prophet reveals that God notes that His people seem to think that they can satisfy the first commandment by outward religious ritual. This has never been acceptable to God and still is not acceptable. In Hebrews 10:5-9 the Scripture repeats this word, "Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." The psalmist had said this in Psalm 51:16-17, "For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

We can be quite sure that God has not changed. Today people do not bring lambs and bullocks to the altar, but giving to the Community Chest, to "Feed the Hungry" drives, to orphanages in Asia, while the heart is not contrite and the soul is not repentant is just as unacceptable to God. God looks on the heart. The poet has said it well when he wrote, "The gifts without the giver is bare." We can be quite sure God is not impressed with the congregation that has a full program of good works in community services, inner city projects, work missions, but has no prayer meeting and spends little time in Bible study.

Jesus of Nazareth gently chided Martha, while approving Mary for having made the better choice, (Luke 10:41-42), when she chose to sit at His feet and hear His words. Doing good works can become an outward show just as much as ritual practices. In the Sermon on the Mount it is written, "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20).

What has been so plainly emphasized in Old Testament Scripture is likewise revealed in the New Testament. In Matthew 25:31-46 is the well known but little used parable of the sheep and the goats, by way of making it clear that not all professing believers will enter the kingdom of heaven. In this context there are four parables that reveal the situation believers must face when Christ returns to judge. Several times Scripture makes the plain assertion "Judgment must begin at the house of God." Matthew 24:45-51 is the parable of the faithful and wise steward who was found obedient when the lord returned. The point at issue was that he did not neglect what his lord wanted him to do. In Matthew 25:1-13 is the parable of the ten virgins who were to be on hand to greet their master on his return. The five foolish virgins who neglected to be ready were shut out from the wedding of their lord. There is no information that they ever were admitted. Matthew 25:14-30 is the parable of the talents. We read that after a long time the lord returned and checked the performance of his servants. The unprofitable servant was cast into outer darkness. "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." This is a sobering revelation. The unprofitable servant suffered the loss of what he already had as well as being cast into outer darkness. In Matthew 25:31-46 is the parable of the sheep and the goats. Here the failure to obey the second commandment is being stressed. It follows practically that the second commandment is neglected because the first commandment had been ignored.

Here again one can feel the practical import of this attention to the second commandment. The first parable dealing with the servant in charge of other servants; the second parable, with virgins waiting to greet a bridegroom; the third dealing with servants entrusted with their master's goods, are all somewhat foreign and removed from our culture. But the fourth parable in dealing with our treatment of the poor and the unfortunate is readily applicable to us. These four should not be taken in isolation from each other. They all deal with the one event, namely the imminent return of Christ.

In Mark 12:28-34 we have the record of an incident in which Jesus of Nazareth teaches which is the first commandment of all. His answer was plain and unequivocal, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." This passage is significant not only because it specifically states the first and second commandments but it shows their proper sequence. We should note the major accent is upon loving God first of all. This is not to belittle the second commandment, but rather to provide for it.

In Galatians 5:14 Paul summarizes the central thrust of the Old Testament law as it applies in the context of human affairs: "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." With the previous Scripture of Mark 12:30-33 in hand there need be no error in supposing that the second commandment should precede the first one. I John 4:20-21 emphasizes the intrinsic relationship between the two great commandments. They are actually one requirement from Almighty God. The actual relationship between God and His creatures is such that the creature is to love God in the operation of which he will love his neighbor. All the truth in this study is the basis for real

stewardship as the believer worships God, adoring Him in contemplation and serving Him in love by obeying His commandments, using all that is in his hands to help his fellowman, especially the poor and the unfortunate.

In thinking along these lines, I have prepared some questions for study.

1. Was the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2:1-7 an active congregation? What fault did the Lord find with that church?
2. Describe how a congregation could be very active in community services while neglecting the primary need of the members.
3. In what way could a woman member of a church be so busy with church related activities that she would suffer spiritual loss?
4. Explain how the love of God in a believer's heart will promote stewardship of what he has in his hands.

## **Chapter 6 – Worship As An Act Of Stewardship**

**Scripture for Study: Deuteronomy 6:1-15; 16:1-3; 1 Corinthians II.-17-29; Philippians 2:1-11**

*Do you have any idea what happens when a person truly worships God?*

As we approach consideration of this topic "Worship As An Act Of Stewardship" it is important that we define our terms. As it is used in this discussion by "worship" we refer to the response of a believer in Christ Jesus to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we look in the Bible for a revelation as to what such a response would properly be.

The fact as demonstrated all over the world is that man can and does worship anything. Isaiah wrote of Israel in his time who worshipped the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers had made. Worship is the response of a person to anybody or anything which that person esteems as the most important person or thing in the whole world. It is the attitude of the gem collector, the jeweler, toward the pearl of great price to gain which the collector will give everything he has. We use the word on occasion to describe love between husband and wife. So we say on occasion "He just worships her", when we mean that she means everything to him. Perhaps the basic aspect in worship is esteem, that which I esteem most valuable, most important, in all that I have in my consciousness is what I can worship. It is that for which I would give up anything or anybody, it is that to which I would give all my time, for which I would give all my money. It is that which I prefer above all else.

A prime element in worship is adoration. To adore is to hold in highest esteem. It includes the idea of being minded to give the best I have in my possession to the one I adore. Another aspect in worship is contemplation. The miser has a joy in looking at his gold. The lover has joy in gazing in the face of the beloved. I can remember the uplifting joy in my heart as I looked into the face of my firstborn child lying asleep in her crib. We had five children born in our family. And each time I looked at one of those my heart was lifted up as I gazed in wonderment at what God had done in giving us this child.

Adoration and contemplation lead into a third element in worship which is service. The worshipper is not only minded to give the best or all that he has, but he is moved to give himself to serve. When Jesus of Nazareth was tempted by Satan to fall down and worship Satan, He replied, "For it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:9-10).

One of the practical problems in the worship of God is that no man has seen God at any time. This means that God is to be known to man by His acts, His works. The revelation of God is in His creation

(Psalm 19:1-6). But this is insufficient. God is not only the Creator, He is also the Savior. Sinful man needs to see Him as God works by His grace to save those who obey Him. In Old Testament times the great work of God in deliverance was the exodus of Israel from Egypt under the leadership of Moses. When Israel was called to love God they were admonished to remember how they had been set free from Egypt.

In that exodus Israel was given through Moses commandments from God that would guide them into blessing. They were also given warning that if they failed to remember what God had done for them in His grace, they would be destroyed. All this was recorded in Deuteronomy 6:1-15. The sad history of Israel is that they forgot how God had delivered them by His power, and how God had given them the land of Canaan. They had been plainly told "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name" (Deuteronomy 6:13). This they failed to do, demonstrating what Paul later observed "What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh." So they suffered the destruction which God had promised in Deuteronomy 6:15. This was the Old Testament demonstration that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (I Corinthians 15:50).

By way of helping them to remember how God had delivered them from Egypt, Moses gave instructions about the Feast of the Passover in Deuteronomy 16:1-3. A similar guidance was given by Jesus of Nazareth when He instituted the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, (I Corinthians 11:17-29). When Israel would think about God to worship Him, they were to remember how they had been delivered from Egypt. Just so, when the believer in Christ would worship God, he should remember how he was delivered from his sin by the death of Christ Jesus on Calvary.

It has been pointed out that an essential element in worship is remembrance. In Old Testament times there was to be no likeness of God presented to the consciousness of the worshipper. God was to be known by His works. God had delivered them from Egypt by His power. He had given them His law to guide them into blessing, having written the Ten Words on tablets of stone. And He had given them the land of Canaan for their possession. Bringing all this to remembrance should have inspired grateful adoration that would lead to obedient service.

In New Testament times Jesus of Nazareth taught "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." But there is no likeness of Jesus of Nazareth in Scripture. There is no direct clue that leads to any conception of His appearance. There is no description of His conduct in His home or in His neighborhood. But we are told what He did. He died for us. By His death and resurrection we are saved. Then we are told He sent forth His Holy Spirit into the hearts of the born again sons of God to "put my laws into their mind and write them in their heart." And we are told that we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. It is by remembering what the son of God did for us on Calvary that we worship Him.

It is worthy of note that what believers are to remember is the death of Jesus Christ. The only aspect of His earthly life that we are to imitate is His yielding to His death on the cross. Peter wrote about this plainly in I Peter 2:21-24. We share in His crucifixion when we humbly yield to suffering as we obey His will. Paul admonished the believers at Philippi to "let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:1-11). We worship God as we remember the death of His Son on our behalf, and this results in changing us.

Paul described this process in II Corinthians 3:18: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." It seems that the dynamic to produce in believers the likeness of Christ is a result of surveying the cross, rather than surveying the fields of service. One can understand how this works when you keep in mind that normally my consciousness is preoccupied with matters that involve me, so that actually I am concerned with myself. If my attention is directed to the needs of the poor, the hungry, the unfortunate, I naturally begin to estimate what I could do, what I should do, that I might be right. All such outlook will be handicapped because it will be what I think I ought to do. The more I do, the prouder I can get. But if I

begin by focussing my attention on what Christ Jesus did for me, and continue beholding that fact, the Holy Spirit will show me what Christ would do and Christ living in me will prompt me to obey His will. Then the more I do the more glory comes to the name of the Lord.

It should be noted that this operation occurs only in the case of a born again new creature in Christ Jesus. To be sure there will be natural persons present at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper who hear all that is said, and such might be influenced to do certain things by way of helping the weak, because they might feel this would be a good thing for them to do. But this is not the significance of that sacrament.

Stewardship occurs when a person has been entrusted with his master's goods. Paul wrote "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (I Corinthians 4:1-2). One of the mysteries that Paul recognized as his responsibility was that of God achieving salvation in the believer by "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:25-29). God in grace sends Christ by the Holy Spirit into the heart of the believer writing in him the words of His law so that the believer is impelled and guided from within to serve God in all that he does.

Even as Jesus of Nazareth spent time in praying to His Father, so will the believer be prompted to seek the face of God in praying. As he counts this faith as a gift from God the believer will exercise himself in worship to gain more and more of the presence of Christ which will move him into serving God and man.

I have prepared the following questions for study.

1. What fact should be kept in mind by a believer that he might grow in his desire to do the will of God?
2. How should an order of worship be planned to produce a desire to serve?
3. How does the sacrament of the Lord's Supper show the importance of each member of the congregation being born again?
4. Point out the similarities between the Feast of the Passover in Deuteronomy 16:1-8 and the Lord's Supper in I Corinthians 11:17-29.

## **Chapter 7 – Study Of The Scripture As An Act Of Stewardship**

### **Scripture for Study: II Timothy 2:14-15**

*Do you feel that you have a good way to study the Bible?*

The Scriptures of the Old Testament and the New Testament are called the Bible. The actual origin of these texts are unknown. Who selected the 39 books in the Old Testament or the 27 books of the New Testament is unknown. There were apparently other writings in Old Testament times as there were other writings in New Testament times. During the time of the Protestant Reformation the present canon of 66 books was identified as the Word of God. Some time before the Reformation the church had decided that the 13 books of the Apocrypha should not be included in the Word of God. Then after the Reformation the Roman Catholic Church reversed the earlier decision of the church and reinstated the Apocrypha as part of the accepted text of Scripture. Occasionally the books of the Apocrypha are found bound in the same volume with the 66 books of the canon, but it is not claimed that these writings that we call the Apocrypha have the same authority as Scripture. The Westminster Confession of Faith names the 66 books of the Old Testament and New Testament as the Word of God, and certifies them as "the only infallible guide and rule in matters of faith and practice." This is the body of Scripture which has been basic in the establishment of evangelical churches in the preaching of the Gospel, in missionary activity, and in

comforting human souls wherever it has been believed. This is what we call the Bible.

In recent generations a new school of thought has been developed which focusses attention upon the unknown origins of the texts of Scripture. This is obviously not the study of the Bible but rather a study about the Bible. Apparently inspired by an application of the theory of evolution, it was assumed that the Scriptures were produced in a cultural process. Such a view completely ignores the word that we have in II Peter 1:21, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

In evaluating the validity of this challenge to the traditional view in which the text as it is in our hands is taken to be the Word of God, we may raise a few questions. First if these scholars are so competent to discover what the original writings were that were supposedly produced in such fashion, why do they not agree among themselves? It is notorious that each arrives at his or her own conclusion. Second, if this new approach has succeeded in bringing the original Word of God to life, why are they not more effective in winning souls to faith in Christ? Why do they not inspire more missionaries? Why do they not manifest more effectiveness in healing broken homes or in comforting broken hearts? Third, is it not true that biblical criticism has fostered unbelief in the Gospel of Christ? Is this not the reason why so many college students have been robbed of their faith? Does this school of thought not provide a rationale for skepticism, rather than a basis for faith?

It is common for scholars holding this modern view to intimate that since the Scriptures were written by men in human language, their form would be as faulty as the human authors would have been in their humanity. This line of argument would say that since Jesus of Nazareth was born of a woman in a human body, He would share in the sin which is common to all mankind. And some are influenced to hold that very view. Jesus of Nazareth taught "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." In terms of our Scripture this is saying not the dotting of an "i" or the crossing of a "t" will be changed.

When He was tempted by Satan, Jesus of Nazareth answered, "It is written." The Lord often quoted Old Testament Scripture and never one time corrected or changed any word. He never spent any time on discussing the social, cultural, national or political circumstances under which that Scripture was written. The words were quoted "as it is written", and they were held to be as the Holy Ghost said. Jesus of Nazareth took the Scriptures word for word with no critical exceptions or any restatement of the truth intimated. The Lord never appraised any Old Testament author or ever referred to the circumstances under which that Scripture was written.

If I take Him as my example, I will take Scripture "as it is written." The Apostle Paul is taken to be perhaps the most learned of all the New Testament writers. He identified himself as "believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets" (Acts 24:14). He evidently considered the Old Testament Scriptures as coming from God. Thus he wrote of the advantage of the Jews because that unto them "were committed the oracles of God" (Romans 3:2). Paul considered the Scriptures as the basis for saving faith, writing "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

Sometimes the question is raised whether the actual form of Old Testament Scripture should be held as authoritative. Paul demonstrates how he felt about this when he based the ground for an important insight into Bible doctrine on the singular number of one word in Old Testament Scripture. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Galatians 3:16). There we find that a whole doctrine is based simply on the fact that that word was in the singular and not in the plural.

In the history of the church there is ample testimony that the great evangelists, preachers, missionaries were known to hold the Scriptures as they are written to be the Word of God. Many earnest humble Sunday School teachers can appreciate the story that is told of a dear old lady who taught an Adult Bible Class for some thirty years. Upon retirement the Sunday School Board gave her as a gift a five volume set

of commentaries. When she was asked a year later how she enjoyed the books she had been given, she replied, "They are interesting to read, but the Bible sure does throw a lot of light on them."

The stewardship aspect of Bible study can be seen when it is recalled that in His providence God has given the Scriptures into our hands. They are able to ground and to sustain faith. It is well to cherish them as the Word of God. They need to be read and read regularly. Cherishing the Bible does not mean only that we hold it to be true as it is, and that we would die if necessary that it should not be destroyed, but it means that we read it, meditate upon it, inwardly digest it, and so let it affect our thinking. With the Scriptures in our hand how can we properly exercise stewardship? Obviously this would be by studying the Scriptures to learn what God has done, what He is doing, and what He will do for men.

Certainly the first thing to do is to read the Bible. There are many versions on the market. New versions come out about one each year. I personally use the King James Version partly because it is the most commonly owned throughout the English speaking world, and partly because it is so faithful to the very words of the original text as I understand it. Since there are so many new versions it is very important that a person should learn the history of the actual events that happened as recorded in the Bible. No matter which version one reads, the main events are in all of them.

It is helpful to remember that the Holy Spirit who inspired the writers of Scripture is present whenever the Scriptures are read to help the reader see such truth as God wants him or her to see. Reading the Bible is reading about what the eternal living God did with human beings, what He revealed that He is doing now, and what He promised that He will do in the future.

If a person wants to establish a habit of Bible reading as daily Bible reading, it could be helpful to start reading the book of Proverbs. In this book there are 31 chapters just as there are 31 days in our longest month. One could follow the practice of reading the chapter of Proverbs that coincides with the date of the month. For example, on October 13 read Proverbs 13. On November 10, read Proverbs 10. Since the book of Proverbs does not present any basic plot or theme that needs to be followed through in seriatim order this could be practiced successfully.

When a person has reached the point where he or she wants to learn about Jesus of Nazareth and His followers, I would suggest a schedule be set up so that one reads through Matthew and then read the book on Acts, then through Mark and follow that by reading the book of Acts. Then one should read through Luke, and follow that by reading the book of Acts. Then read through John and follow by reading the book of Acts. In this way the reader will be taken over the record of the earthly career of Jesus of Nazareth and the history of the believers in Christ who took the Gospel to the world. By now the names of principle persons, places and events will be familiar. Then the new student can begin to read in the Epistles, taking note of any new words that are different from everyday speech. The dictionary will help. In this way the new student will learn what the Bible says. By the time the student has read through the Gospels and the repeated readings of the book of Acts and one or two epistles, his reading could well extend to the Old Testament. It might be well to alternate between Old Testament and New Testament, reading one time in the Old Testament and then in the New Testament and then in the Old Testament and then the New Testament and so on.

I would start reading in the Gospels because then I would come face to face with Jesus Christ, Who is after all the main reason why I am reading the Bible at all. I can learn about Jesus Christ through the preaching and teaching of the Gospel by witnesses. When I read the Bible I can learn more, because the Holy Spirit shows the things of Christ to me personally.

I have prepared the following questions for study.

1. How important is it to have a set time in the day and a chosen spot in the home for Bible reading, study and prayer?
2. How do you think Paul's warning in Colossians 2:8 could apply in the study of the Scriptures?
3. How does Paul's use of the Old Testament Scripture in Galatians 3:16 indicate the authenticity of the



very words in the Old Testament "as it is written"?

4. What guidance is there for me as a teacher of Scripture in the fact that Jesus of Nazareth in quoting Old Testament Scripture "as it is written", never corrected or changed it?

And by the way when Jesus of Nazareth in the Sermon on the Mount said "ye have heard" He was apparently referring to the teaching of the Scribes and the Pharisees. He did not say "You have read." Whenever He said "How readest thou" in directing attention to Old Testament Scripture He applied Old Testament Scripture "as it is written."

## Chapter 8 – Stewardship In Vocation

**Scripture for Study: Luke 10:25-37; Isaiah 49:1-6; Jeremiah 1:4-10; Romans 12:1-21**

*Does it seem reasonable to think that God would be interested in my daily activities?*

The word "vocation" occurs only once in the King James Version of the Bible. Then it refers distinctly to the relationship existing between the believer in Christ and his living Lord in him. Apparently the word "calling" is used a number of times in the Bible, and it always refers to this relationship. It is never used to refer to a person's occupation. In one passage, I Corinthians 7:18-24, where the social status of the believer is mentioned, the use of the word "call" refers obviously to the spiritual relationship between the Savior and the sinner. Thus it is used in Romans 11:29, II Timothy 1:9, Hebrews 3:1, II Peter 1:10 and other Scriptures.

There is no place in Scripture that the word "calling" is ever used to refer to a person's secular occupation. There is no such statement in the Bible as that a believer is called to be a housewife, a carpenter or a salesman. The providence of God is no doubt involved when a person becomes a farmer, or a manual laborer or an office worker, but this is not revealed to be an operation of the Holy Spirit. In the historic language of our church the word "avocation" is used to refer to secular activity, in the course of which a person earns his living in temporal fashion. It is possible that some in pursuing the line of thought of this study, could have used the title "Stewardship in Avocation." To refer to a man's occupation as a carpenter, as his "calling" of God, is not warranted by the Bible usage of that term.

Several other observations as we enter into this study seem to be important to help us keep our discussion within the perspective of the New Testament. It does seem important in setting forth the meaning of the Gospel that we should be guided by New Testament ideas. Believers in Christ are members of Christ's body and are called the church. Now this reality, the church, is so different from anything in the natural world that no natural entity can be used as an illustration. The church is spoken of as the body of Christ with the individual believers referred to as members, as in I Corinthians 12:12-27. But we know that believers are being won and added to the body by the preaching of the Gospel. So here the figure of speech in calling the church a body breaks down because how can a body add an arm or a leg? Peter refers to believers as lively stones, meaning living stones, built together as a spiritual house. But what stone would be a living thing? It seems obvious from these and from other instances that the church as the body of Christ is supernatural.

It has developed in the literature of our church to speak of the church as if it were a person. The New Testament presents the church as the body of a person, of Jesus Christ. This observation will help us to appreciate that there is no commandment addressed to the church as an individual entity. The one responsibility of the church as a group of believers is to know and obey the will of the Lord Jesus Christ,

who is the Head of the Church.

In this connection it will be revealing to note that the New Testament does not often use collective nouns. The New Testament does not refer to a Christian family, though it does mention believers who are husbands, wives and children. The New Testament does not refer to a Christian army, though it does refer to believers as soldiers. In the provision Jesus of Nazareth made for the communion and fellowship of His believers, He instituted the sacrament of the Lord's Supper using the bread and the cup as symbols of His body. The bread was to be eaten and the wine was to be swallowed as a remembrance of His death until He comes. It is obvious that the eating of bread and the drinking of wine is done by individual persons, singly as unto his or her personal Savior. This approach to our subject will help us to realize that the calling of the believer into communion and fellowship in faith and obedience to the living Lord is a personal individual matter, with implications through the believer's obedient activities in all the world about him.

Four Scripture passages have been selected for our study. Luke 10:25-37 presents the well-known parable of the Good Samaritan. The context shows that the Lord was teaching the meaning of the second great commandment "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The Good Samaritan accepted the incident as a call to act in love. On the basis of this fact we can learn that we should accept as our responsibility the opportunity to serve the unfortunate and the needy. We may note also that the Good Samaritan did not donate all his goods nor even divide his goods equally, rather he gave amply as much as was needed.

Isaiah 49:1-6 is a prophetic Scripture in which is revealed the words that express the thought of the Messiah who has come as the righteous Servant chosen by God to effect salvation for His people. As we read this passage we may note first in verse 1 the Messiah would come in a body that God the Father prepared for Him through Mary of Bethlehem. Before His body was born He was named and we can see this in Matthew 1:21. In Isaiah 49:2 the Messiah will be sent to speak the Word of God. This reminds us of the book of Hebrews 4:12-13. Third, in Isaiah 49:3 the Messiah is told that His mission is to glorify God. Matthew 3:17 shows how this applied to Jesus of Nazareth. In Isaiah 49:4 we have insight into the mind of the Son of God as He ministered as Jesus of Nazareth. And in this connection we should look at Matthew 27:46. In Isaiah 49:5-6 we see that although Messiah would not succeed in calling Israel as a nation to serve God, He would call Gentiles who would respond to the Gospel and share in the salvation provided by God. This is discussed by Paul in Romans 9:22-30 and in 11:25-27.

Jeremiah 1:4-10 is a personal report by Jeremiah of his calling by God to serve as a prophet. Although the ministry of Jeremiah was special and individual there are lessons revealed that can apply to any born again believer in Christ. In this account we can see that God knew about Jeremiah before he was born. Even so God knows about each believer before he becomes a member of the body of Christ. God knew before I accepted Christ that I would do so and He knew how I would be called to serve Christ in my personal life.

Paul had this in mind when he wrote Ephesians 2:10 saying, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Jeremiah did not plan where to go or what to say. God would direct him where to go and God would tell him what to say. Making plans for the future is a common tendency in human thinking. But the characteristic attitude of the believer is "What wilt thou have me to do, Lord?"

Jeremiah was given a message to deliver and a mission to perform. Believers in Christ have been given their message to preach the Gospel to every creature. In reading the commission given to Jeremiah we are reminded of Paul's description of his task in II Corinthians 10:4 when he wrote, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." For me as a believer in Christ, a member of His body, I can keep in mind that it is Christ that speaks the message and performs the work through me. It is not I but "Christ liveth in me."

Romans 12:1-21 is the description of the living which a believer does as he obeys his Head, Christ

Jesus. This is what the righteousness the believer receives from his Head looks like. Verses 1-2 "present your bodies" means yield your human natures, body, soul and spirit, as living sacrifices every day, moment by moment, always yielding one's self to His will. "Be not conformed" means be not shaped by pressure, physical, social, psychological, cultural, and do not let natural human arguments shape your thinking. "Be ye transformed" as from within, as an apple on the stem, as a lily in the field. Believers do not imitate. They activate what the Head puts in them.

Romans 12:3 "Not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think." The believer is only one member of the body. He has his part but not even the main part. His Head is Christ. In verses 4-8 many members have gifts differing. "Let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith": each one serving as per his or her assignment. By the way gifts are not for personal profit but for the common good. In verses 9-16 there is a compact summary of how the believer will believe as he is led. Basic in all this is self-denial, redeeming the time, buying up the opportunities to glorify Him. Verses 17-21 give special attention to the most difficult aspect "Love your enemies."

We should note how personal and individual each reference is. All this is a message to me and to you as believers personally. These considerations will help us get some idea of how God will want us to act in faithful obedience to Him in the situation in which we live.

I have prepared the following questions for study.

1. When could something like the priests and the Levites in the story of the Good Samaritan be seen in a church?
2. How does the parable of the Good Samaritan differ from Medicare? Or from the Food Stamp program?
3. Describe some of the conditions that would tend to conform a believer's lifestyle "to this world."
4. How can a believer do good to those who spitefully abuse him or her?

## **Chapter 9 – Stewardship Of The Earth and Its Resources**

**Scripture for Study: I Kings 21:1-24; Isaiah 5:8-10; Micah 2:1-2; Exodus 23:10-11; Leviticus 25:8-17, 23**

*Do you realize that the Old Testament was written so that believers in Christ could know what the New Testament means?*

The Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ must be believed in order to be effectual. A person must understand, must hear and see the truth, that he may believe it. God revealed His grace in saving sinners through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. This revelation was given first through His dealings with chosen persons as we read in Hebrews 1:1-2 where it is written, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son."

While the revelation would be expressed in words, their meanings would be demonstrated by events in the daily lives of the people, in which God would manifest His will. Thus Paul told the Corinthians, in referring to events in the history of Israel, in I Corinthians 10:11, "Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition." It will be helpful for us to remember that the children of Israel were just human beings, as sinful as any other people. The guidance they received from their prophets was not formulated by exceptionally good wise men who had brilliant insight, but by holy men of God who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

In this session we shall direct our attention to how God used the promised land to reveal His will.

When God called Abraham to forsake the land in which he was born, He promised to bring Abraham "unto a land that I will show thee." The issue that Abraham faced was similar to that of the rich young ruler to whom Jesus of Nazareth gave this challenge, as in Matthew 19:21. "Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me."

When God sent Moses to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt, they were all slaves with no possessions of their own. They were promised that the land of Canaan, which God had promised Abraham, would be given to them as a gift. All they needed for their living would be given to them. Actually no one ever brought anything into this world. Every single thing I have has been given to me. This is the truth. But it is not readily recognized. In the case of the Hebrews it was very obvious. As slaves they owned nothing, as citizens in Canaan they would have lands, houses, crops given to them as we read in Deuteronomy 6:10-11.

It is helpful in the interpretation of Old Testament Scripture to remember that Israel was used as a demonstration of God's will. God began working with the Hebrews when they were in bondage as slaves. He sent Moses to lead them out in deliverance, even as He sent forth His Son in the New Testament to redeem sinners. God brought the Hebrews out of Egypt by His power, and across the desert in His grace. They were often unbelieving and disobedient but God prevailed. He brought them into a land already developed, and established them in a prepared situation which had not been their own. He watched over them, keeping them in His care. It was very important that they should recognize and remember that all that they had was given to them.

Since all the children of Israel had was from God, God gave them instruction as to how they should act with it. Actually this was guidance for their stewardship. In Exodus 23:10-11 we read:

"And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof. but the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy oliveyard."

Every seventh year they were to let the land lie fallow, no farming. There would be volunteer grain growing up but this would be left for the poor. They were to do the same with their fruit, vineyards and oliveyards. But this arrangement was understood to be only for Israel, the people whom God had chosen to bless. Today we can apply this to believers in Christ.

Believers are heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ. These hold all that is in their hands as from God. They do not use their possessions for their own pleasure or satisfaction. They count all that they have as having been given to them from God. They can give it away to the poor, to the unfortunate, because God will take care of them. They practice stewardship in obedience to God's will.

When the disciples heard that Jesus of Nazareth directed the rich young ruler to give up ownership of all his goods they were amazed. Peter asked Him in Matthew 19:27-29, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" And he was told that those who had left everything for the Lord Jesus Christ "shall receive a hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

This is the basic idea in all stewardship. All that I have is from God. It is proper that I use it in His will. I need have no fear, He will provide for me. Such goods are not only money, but they include ability, good fortune, beauty, good health, anything that makes me fortunate and gives me an advantage over others. All such is to be available for service in the will of God.

In the case of Israel in the Old Testament, the land of Canaan was particularly good. For them there were specific regulations to guide the Israelites; for us today there is the Holy Spirit to guide us. The regulations outlined in Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy were designed for guidance in the use of the land for the welfare of all, especially for the poor and for the unfortunate. In Leviticus 23:22 farmers were instructed to leave corners of the field unharvested, and all gleanings should be left in the fields for the poor. Those gleanings would be grain that would fall to the ground while the reaping was done. When

harvesting was done there would be an overflow, and they were not to collect that. They were not to gather that grain. We may remember that this is what Ruth was sent to do. She was sent to glean in the field of Boaz. She went through the field where the harvesting had been done, picking up the stray bits of grain that was left lying on the ground.

In Leviticus 25:4-7 and in Deuteronomy 15:1-2 it was specified that every seventh year would be the jubilee year. In that year all debts would be cancelled. I wonder how many people realize that in the economy that Moses established, in the will of God, it was arranged that all debts would be cancelled every seven years. Moses went on to point out that if an Israelite was under bondage as a servant because of a debt to another Israelite, he was to be set free in that year of jubilee.

In Leviticus 25:8-16 each fiftieth year would be a special diamond jubilee when all family lands even if sold to others would be returned to the original family owners. In these ways no one could bind himself to be in debt for longer than seven years, and no family could be forever without their inheritance. This was a simple practical procedure which prevented the rich from becoming too rich, and the poor from becoming too poor.

This was all presented as the will of Almighty God who willed to protect the poor, as well as to provide for all in the nation. Acceptance of this guidance was a matter of obedience to the will of God. In applying this insight into the nature of stewardship as it applies to the goods of this world in our day and time, we should keep in mind that this is truth that applies primarily to each believer individually.

This world's goods may be real estate, but by no means only that. It will involve anything I may have that gives me an advantage over anyone else. This may be a fortunate social position, it may be good physical health, it may be personal beauty, it may be athletic prowess, or it even may be personal popularity. About all this we ask again in the words of Paul in I Corinthians 4.7, "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" In other words the will of God is such that so far as any one of us are concerned, that which we have in our possession, that which we have to our advantage, is not ours. It has been entrusted to us.

I can remember Dr. R. A. Torrey teaching from the case of the rich young ruler, when he exhorted us students in words like this: "If you have any advantage over anybody else be very careful. That advantage if used for your own interest can be a snare and will lead you away from God. That can ruin your relationship with the Lord, and bring you into misery. But if you will use that advantage to help someone else who is without advantage, that very advantage can become a means of blessing, and you can enjoy increasing favor with God." The word that the Lord gave to the young man was "Go, sell what thou hast" that means give up your personal ownership "and take up thy cross," that means self-denial, "and follow me." This is the basic thrust of stewardship in the possession of things.

In connection with this study I have prepared the following questions.

1. List some of the advantages that one person could have over others in your neighborhood.
2. How could being a member of one denomination give anyone an advantage over persons who belong to some other denominations?
3. How could having a good education give you an advantage?
4. How could a pleasing public image give a person an advantage over others?
5. Could living in a certain neighborhood ever give a person advantage?

## Chapter 10 – Stewardship Of Money

**Scripture for Study: Deuteronomy 15:1-11; Matthew 18.-23-35**

*In what sense can a believer in Christ think of his money as his own?*

As we approach this study of the stewardship of money we can feel that we are on familiar ground. Mostly our usual thinking about stewardship is in terms of money, particularly money which we give to congregational projects. But this will not help us so much if we want to understand the stewardship of what money really means for the believer.

Money has become a convenient way to package my share of this world's goods. It represents in tangible form the result of my subduing the earth and having dominion over it. It is basically a means of livelihood. With money I and my folks can eat, sleep and do what we may want to do in this world. I can lay it in store so that on a rainy day I need not be in want. I can buy for my use or for my pleasure whatever I want. If I have a lot of it others may honor me and some may even envy me, but basically it is what I use for living.

Our interest in this study is to find out the will of God about my handling of my money. To earn, to get money, involves my time and my strength. It is characteristic of my sinful nature to consider that my time is my own, to do with as I please; and my strength and my ability is for me to use as I see fit.

The Scriptures reveal that such an outlook is wrong. The truth is that time and opportunity are given to me in providence. Ability and strength are also given to me. Because of sin which makes everything serve self, I am inclined to assume that all is mine.

When God called Abraham to obey Him, promising to bless him and make him rich, God outlined to his descendants, the Hebrews, certain guidelines that they could follow to be in God's will, and so receive His blessing. In order to establish the truth that all time is a gift from God and that all goods are given in the providence of God, Moses instructed the people to observe the Sabbath Day, and to tithe, as essential elements in the economy of God's people.

The Sabbath as one day in seven was set aside as a separated portion of time which was not to be used for profit or for pleasure. All time is a gift and setting aside one-seventh would serve to remind the people of this fact. The tithe is one-tenth of the results of labor, and it reveals to the people that all that they could ever produce really comes as a gift from God. Setting aside one-tenth as unto the Lord is a reminder that all comes from God. Both these practices are much debated in our time.

In our society it is difficult to set aside one day in seven for no work. Even so the tithe is not mentioned as a requirement in the New Testament. This results in much controversy over whether it is required in the life of the believer. Regardless of the conclusions that may be reached in such controversy the truth involved seems to be clear enough.

We need to remember that the believer is not to be governed by what Presbyterians think, or what Methodists do, or what the Baptists may say. The believer as a member of the Body of Christ is under the direct guidance of the living Lord, whose will is activated in the believer by the Holy Spirit of God. With due regard and deference to the conscientious ideas of others, the believer will act as he is led by "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Even so I feel I should bear witness of my observations among the churches and the communities where I have been privileged to serve. I have known a doctor whose practice among poor people prevented him from ever attending church with any regularity. The people were so poor they could not go to a hospital and he practiced his medicine in their homes. This man was a very sincere spiritually-minded believer in Christ.

I would definitely encourage any believer to honor the Sabbath Day and keep it holy. I recognize that

this poses a problem for the believer who must work on Sunday to earn his living. My sympathy goes out to such a person. And I can understand that for him "the ox is in the ditch." If your circumstances prevent you from respecting Sunday as the Sabbath Day, then I would advise you to make sure that you set up for yourself a routine in which you do take time to be holy.

I once was pastor of an earnest man who became a believer in Christ under my preaching. In the days of the depression in the 1930's he lost his job, lost his car, lost his home and was down to living with his wife on \$1 a day. When he lost his furniture, so that he and his wife were sitting on store boxes eating their tomato soup for supper, he said to her, "The preacher has been encouraging us to tithe that we might be blessed of God. He said that if we did not earn much, it would not cost much. If we earned nothing, it would cost nothing. If we earned more, we could afford it. Now that we are down to \$1 a day, I say we start. Tonight we put aside our first dime." That man kept it up. He became an executive in promoting a business that covered several states. He lived in a suburban home, drove a Stutz car. But I remember how he said to me, "I tithe. I would be afraid not to tithe. All I have is from God. With His blessing I am rich even without these goods." I realize many may want to judge such an approach as not worthy of the believer. I can understand such sentiment, but I am telling you just how this worked in the case of that man.

Certainly there is something better than the tithe: turn everything, all, over to God. That is better. Many have found that it is practical to practice the tithe as a minimum, and then give as freewill gifts over and above the tithe all that you can. The big truth about the Sabbath and the tithe is that all my time and all my goods are gifts from Almighty God whom I should thank, praise, and serve as I am led by Christ living in me.

In Deuteronomy 15:1-11 Moses outlined instructions for Israel which they should follow in the land. Every seventh year all debts were to be cancelled. In verses 7-11 Moses gave special instruction about the poor, saying

"But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth . . . Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to the poor, and to thy needy, in thy land."

This would demonstrate the will of God. Israel did not obey this, and unbelievers today will not obey this; but this is what the believer can expect the will of Christ to be for him.

In Matthew 18:23-35 we have the parable of the unforgiving servant. The parable uses money as the goods, but the point in the parable is summarized in verse 35: "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." This is obviously intended to teach that believers should practice a kindly gracious generous spirit toward others.

Both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament there seems to be a distinction between those who are brothers in the Lord and all others. In Old Testament time the debts of the brother were to be cancelled; but in Deuteronomy 15:3 we read, "Of a foreigner thou mayest exact it again: but that which is thine with thy brother thine hand shall release." In the New Testament in James 2:15 we read: "If a brother or a sister be naked, and destitute of daily food" and then again in I John 3:17 we read: "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" We do know that the early church made it a practice to share money with brethren in need, as in Acts 2:45. In all these cases and others in the New Testament record, this sharing seems to have been practiced among fellow believers.

Thus we have reviewed to our mind teaching that comes from the Scripture concerning what God expects us to do with our money. We are to be conscious of the fact that anything that we have, we have as a gift from Him. The strength with which we earn it, the wisdom with which we manage it, and the circumstances under which we are able to keep it, are all controlled by the providence of God in the goodness of God. We should understand that what we have we hold in trust as from God.

I have prepared certain questions for study.

1. If a man were the only support of his family, having a wife and two minor children, and the only job open to him required him to work on Sunday, how would you advise him? On what grounds?
2. If a girl were supporting herself as a maid and was obliged to be on duty on Sunday, how would you advise her to proceed?
3. What would be the best reason to practice tithing? What danger should the tither guard against?
4. What would be the best reasons for not tithing? What dangers should the believer in Christ who does not tithe guard against?
5. What are the advantages and the disadvantages of budgeting our benevolent giving?

## Chapter 11 – Stewardship Of Institutions

### Scripture for Study: Deuteronomy 12:12-15; Mark 2:23-3:6

*Have you ever noticed how much of our life is controlled by our customary way of doing things?*

In this chapter we turn our attention to stewardship of institutions. What we mean by institutions is our customary way of doing things. We have only indirect references in Scripture to such institutions as we practice today. So we shall need to apply Scripture to the believer in the course of his conduct as he participates in these institutions.

A primary institution is marriage. There is no structural pattern of a wedding in the Bible. Marriage ceremonies have been developed differently in various societies, but the Scriptures do refer to husband and wife. The actual activities of each are not described. But there are certain specific guidelines. The man is to be responsible to God in his daily conduct. He is to be the head of the family as director of affairs. The woman is to be his helper. The word to the man is "Husbands, love your wives." And that is plainly not because she is loveable, or as long as or while she is loveable, but because she is his wife. Love in the New Testament has very little sentiment in it. It is a matter of seeking the welfare of, promoting the interest of anybody. This applies even when the wife is unpleasant.

The word to the wife is "Submit yourselves unto your own husband as unto the Lord." There is no bearing in these directives on comparison of men and women. This specifically relates to husbands and wives living together at home. Because all persons are naturally sinful they are tempted to act selfishly. Even believers are tempted in their human natures to serve self And insofar as they do this they sin, and inherit the consequences.

Cultural modes will vary but the eternal principles are always present. The husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it. The wife is to submit to her own husband as unto the Lord. She will be a helper. There is no reference to comparative gifts or comparative abilities, or comparative personalities whatever.

The unhappy practice of divorce is recognized as proper in some cases. Here again the same situation exists in that a believing person can act unselfishly even in the course of a divorce, and can glorify God in humility and meekness. Whereas a natural person could act selfishly in sin, in the course of divorce. Just as with the wedding ceremony, there is no classic pattern for divorce proceedings revealed in Scripture.

The home is another institution we maintain. The Bible does not describe a home. There will be parents or a parent. Father and mother, aunts, uncles, grandparents may all be present in the home. The same challenge confronts each to act in a way that will glorify God. To do this each must be led by the



living Lord. There is no structured pattern or principles to be applied.

Guidance can readily be found in Scripture, as in Philippians 2:34:

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

Such guidance is for all who belong to Christ. There is no reference to the comparative quality or work of any personality involved. Certainly conduct will vary according to the circumstances but prevail.

Government is another institution in which we are involved. Our next chapter will deal with stewardship in politics, but even here we should note that the believer in Christ has an opportunity to glorify his Lord in the way he conducts himself in his public affairs. There are laws set out by the government such as traffic laws. The believers will remember that the Scriptures do give guidance in all these matters.

In Romans 13 there is a full discussion: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." One of the problems the believer faces is that some officials are incompetent; some are unworthy; some are dishonest. We can keep in mind they are all sinful. But Scripture gives clear guidance: "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another." Certainly some will be worthy and some will be unworthy but the believer is not the judge. Traffic laws, taxes are set up by the government. The believer abides by the law no matter what others may do. And he pays his taxes honestly as unto God.

Another institution is education. We maintain schools and colleges for the education of our children and young people. Here again the believer is confronted with serious problems. In our country there are many unbelievers, and the majority rules. So it happens that the public has decided that the beliefs of Christians shall not be part of the curriculum of the public schools. But our children must go to school. This creates a vast problem. Each believer must face that situation the best he can. By whatever means he may choose to employ, the believing parent must seek to teach his child about God, must warn his child against error. In passing I would comment to say that one of the best ways to provide for the child even in the public school is to secure believers as teachers. But the solution in any case is not simple. In the effort to achieve desirable education constant vigilance is the price of success.

Another institution is entertainment. Movies, TV, radio, sport, all these have become an ever increasing part of our daily routine. You could conceive each one of them as a separate institution. They are the customary way of doing things. Here the believer is distinctly on the defensive. Entertainment takes so much time and so much money that it absorbs a major portion of what we have and do.

All such activities must be scrutinized and evaluated, and then dealt with. We do this with food and so we have pure food laws. We do this with medicine and so we have the Federal Drug Administration to supervise. But we are in real disadvantage about morals. It is popular in our society to insist on no censorship. Everything goes. And here the challenge to the believer is to set his own house in order: personal example cannot be ignored.

Religion is another institution that confronts the believer. Denominations develop cultural preferences and procedures. The individual believer must be aware of the customs that are hurtful. And that can be in the very church to which he belongs. There are congregations that profess that the Bible is "the only infallible guide and rule in matters of faith and practice," and then they do not study the Bible. You may say "That is ridiculous" and I will have to tell you sadly "But it is true." Some who say they believe in prayer do not attend prayer meeting. Some who claim to belong to Christ Jesus do not teach the need of the new birth.

It is customary for some who profess faith in Christ to use Sunday entirely for profit or for pleasure. The only solution for any believer is to follow no man even in matters of religion but the Lord only. Observing the Sabbath as a day of rest was an institution in the religion of God's people especially since

the time of Moses. In Deuteronomy 5:12-15 there is a clear cut description of how it should be observed. This took the form of a rest from labor for both man and beast but it had spiritual implications as well. Labor under duress from difficulties was part of the curse which followed man's sin as we read in Genesis 3:17-19. The Sabbath Day of rest was a constant reminder that the curse was neither final nor absolute. There could and would be deliverance. The spiritual meaning of the Sabbath as an institution is fully set out in Hebrews 4:1-9. The Sabbath does emphasize rest but it has much more meaning than relief from the daily grind of manual labor. Jesus of Nazareth taught that the Sabbath was made for man pointing out that the observance of the Sabbath as a rest from worldly activity is actually beneficial to a man's personal being which includes his relationship to God.

We have been considering and studying the believer's stewardship in the course of participating in the institutions of the day. And about this I have prepared several questions for study.

1. How should a wife act who is mentally more capable than her husband?
2. How should a husband act who makes better use of the family's money than his wife does?
3. What shall parents do when the public school teacher casts aspersion on the Scriptures as being untrue?
4. What shall parents do when the Sunday School class plans a trip to a football game during Sunday morning?

## **Chapter 12 – Stewardship and Politics**

### **Scripture for Study: Isaiah 11:1-9; 42:1-4**

*Can you realize the difference it would make in your thinking if you were only a tourist in your community?*

Our study in this chapter is going to be stewardship in politics. Let us remember that no word from Jesus of Nazareth, as recorded in the Scripture, was ever sent to any government of any nation as an entity of its own. His reply to Pilate in John 18:36, "My kingdom is not of this world" makes it as plain as words can put it that He had no message for affairs of any national sort.

Another truth for us to remember is that while God dealt with Israel in the Old Testament as a nation under the operation of His law, as set forth by Moses, Israel proved to be incorrigible in sin. Then God pronounced that He would do a new thing, something entirely different under a new covenant in which He would give to His people out of His grace and mercy what they could never achieve by their own efforts. He would regenerate them individually as His own children, put His Holy Spirit within them, so that His law would be written on their hearts and they would willingly inwardly want to do His will. All this we now recognize as being "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

When Jesus of Nazareth taught how God's people would live, Nicodemus was puzzled. He came to Jesus by night to ask, "How can these things be?" He was told the simple profound truth, "Ye must be born again." This is the major thrust of all Scripture.

In making creatures that could be brethren of His Son, the creation of Adam was not the final step in God's program. Adam was made of dust, and the truth is "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." But the second Adam, the Son of God, incarnate, was of the Spirit, and the new creatures who believed in Him became the children of God in the Spirit.

It was characteristic of the children of Adam that they would band themselves together as they did at Babel in Genesis 11, and attempt to secure their values by corporate effort. But it would be characteristic

of the children of God to individually commit themselves to God as did Abraham in Genesis 12 and acquire from God as a gift all that they would ever need or want.

The prophets Isaiah, Amos, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc., saw that the new covenant would result in the blessedness that God had promised Abraham. This would not come to the people of God in any human form or fashion, but it would be theirs spiritually. The new covenant would be activated by the Messiah, by Christ. No prophet ever revealed anything about the work of the Messiah in any political situation. Isaiah 11:1-9 describes the rule of the Messiah and shows how He will deal with each individual person. He would be one to whom the Gentiles would come, but never as nations.

There was no intimation that the social order would be changed. Isaiah 41:1-4 reveals that God would in His sovereignty move to release His people from their bondage in the flesh, and thus enable them to come to Him in the Spirit that they might have the blessing of Abraham. When Paul referred to persons receiving the blessing of Abraham, he was not referring to social groups but to individuals, as in Galatians 3:14 where we read: "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

Just as Israel was destroyed in the judgment of God in the Old Testament while God called out a remnant of individuals who were humbly repentant, so is the plan of God to destroy the whole world in the New Testament, while calling out the believers as the remnant. Paul wrote in Romans 11:5, "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace."

That this present world shall be destroyed is the plain teaching of the New Testament. The Gospels record plainly this was the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. It is impossible to read Matthew chapters 24 and 25, Mark 13 and Luke 21 without learning that heaven and earth shall pass away. Paul describes the cataclysmic end of the world very plainly in II Thessalonians 1:7-12 and Peter is even more detailed in II Peter 3:1-13 where he wrote: "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Paul wrote in II Corinthians 5:20: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ." This points directly to our function among men today. If anyone should seem to sneer at the thought that our first concern is to win souls to be saved, let us just remember this is what Jesus of Nazareth came into the world to do. And I can tell you He has told me "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:21).

With the words of Peter and Paul in mind, it seems clear that the believer can think of himself as a foreigner in this world where he lives as a tourist. This does not mean that he is unmindful of his responsibilities. He obeys the traffic laws. He pays his debts and he takes every opportunity to act in such a way that his Lord will be praised for him being the kind of man he is.

As a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ I seek to get the attention of as many persons as I can that I might tell them the Gospel does bring benefits and comforts to all who believe. Homes can be reunited right in this world, and they can be blessed. Hearts may be comforted and people may be assured in personal problems, but the bottom line always is that the soul will be saved by the grace of God. We read in Luke 19:10, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Has the believer then no responsibility in this world? Oh yes he has. Jesus of Nazareth taught in Matthew 22:21, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." Paul has described all of this carefully in Romans 13. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." The meaning here is obvious. Whatever the rules are, we play it that way honestly, humbly.

In the case of an American there seems to be a unique complication in all of that because government is by the people, and each American citizen is one of the people. So even though I belong in heaven and my treasure is there, while I am here in the United States of America I am part of the government through my vote. So I will become acquainted with the public issues, I will consider the import of political platforms, I will appraise candidates for office, I may even campaign on behalf of certain laws or against

certain laws, as I think such may affect the welfare of others. I will be loyal to my country, "whatever thy hand finds to do" I will do it with all my might.

In all my public responsibility I will seek to leave a good impression of unselfish interest on behalf of others, especially on behalf of the poor and the unfortunate. But I will entertain no hopes of ever being able to arrive at perfect conditions down here in this world. The majority will rule, and the majority are ungodly and sinful. However even if those in control are crooks, I can be honest to the glory of God.

I know from what the Scriptures say that the world will be destroyed. How then shall I see my function as a believer in the Gospel? I see all my fellow human beings as being passengers on a sinking ship. I am in a lifeboat calling any and all "whosoever will" to get into my lifeboat, the Gospel, that they might be saved. To make my message seem real that my hearers might have confidence in me, I share in the local public operations which are my responsibility and my opportunity. I obey traffic laws. I pay my taxes. I vote at election time. I belong to the P.T.A. I give to the Red Cross. I give to Easter Seals, orphanages and so on and on. I support my mayor. I support my governor. I support my president. I respect my police. In our office at The Bible For You, Inc. headquarters we have a daily prayer meeting, at which time we pray, among other requests, for our president, our governor and our public officials. I am concerned about all men everywhere. I pray daily that God may soon complete His work among men and end man's suffering on the face of the earth. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Amen.

I have prepared the following questions for study.

1. Why should I pray for a president that I voted against?
2. On what grounds could a believer ever feel right about malting a political speech?
3. What would seem to be the proper attitude of a believer about international affair?
4. When millions are starving in Africa so that it would take millions to feed them, why should I give my dollar and a quarter to a "save the children fund?"