

YOUTH SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

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With Additional Study Outlines for
Youth Home Success Fellowship

NAME: _____

CHURCH LOCATION: _____

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ABOUT PASTOR W.F. KUMUYI

Pastor (Dr.) William Folorunso Kumuyi, previously a professor of mathematics at the University of Lagos, is the founding pastor of the Deeper Life Bible Church and General Superintendent of Deeper Christian Life Ministry, Worldwide. The Church with its headquarters in Lagos officially began on November 7, 1982 with a simple message: **“Jesus transforms lives - bringing not only healing but a complete and fully formed Christian character.”** By 1988, the Conference of Pentecostal and Evangelical Churches worldwide recognized Deeper Life Bible Church as the single largest church in Africa, and the third largest single congregation in the world.

The phenomenal growth of the church tends to overshadow its small beginning. With 15 adult members in 1973, Kumuyi began an interdenominational weekly Bible study in Lagos. By 1975, this fledgling group quickly grew to 1500 people who assembled faithfully every Monday to hear the systematic, expository and rich teaching of the scriptures with practical application that is immediately helpful and relevant to listeners. Less than a decade later, the Bible Study group became what is now the Deeper Life Bible Church and grew to 350,000 members at the Lagos headquarters church with mission work in 42 countries of the world. The church has since sustained an unprecedented growth trajectory leading to worldwide membership strength in the millions. Pastor Kumuyi, from the beginning of his ministry, has been blessed with divine success because of his commitment to teaching sound doctrine, a stellar and pristine character, unparalleled commitment to leadership development and divine giftedness.

A humble and outstanding teacher and preacher, Pastor Kumuyi exemplifies servant leadership. He commits himself tirelessly and selflessly to achieve divinely ordained goals. He has a colossal grasp of the scriptures coupled with uncanny ability to dissect scriptural truths. Preaching between two worlds, bridging the context and the content of the biblical text to meet the realities and the needs of present day led many listeners to conclude that he **“teaches the Bible as if he was there when it was written”**. The Bible serves as the proof text for his teaching and preaching.

With a thematic approach, he gives a wide range of Bible passages supporting, clarifying and expanding his main point. A typical Kumuyi teaching is a beauty to behold. He brightens and deepens delivery with laborious scholarship and stylistic deployment of a vast range of figurative, alliterative devices. Kumuyi's message is music to the ears and balm to the spirit. It comes across with crystal clarity free from the din and distractions of fleeting hysterics and unnecessary drama. It is not uncommon to see on a typical Sunday service, princes, paupers, professors and priests sit side by side reaching for the cross and surrendering to the Lord in response to a heart-rending sermon. This emphasis on the primacy of preaching and the exaltation of the Word is one of Kumuyi's great legacies to the body of Christ.

Much of the church's cohesion and shared sense of community have been driven by the inspiring and exemplary leadership of Pastor Kumuyi. His infectious passion for evangelism is undiminished. He is passionate about leadership training and equipping pastors, teachers, evangelists and Christian workers. . As his congregation blossomed throughout Africa, the Deeper Christian Life Ministry has also extended its missionary exploits to Western Europe, Russia, Asia, India and North America. Kumuyi credits God for the success recorded so far by the church: **“The bottom line is that God in His own wisdom and power raised up the church and has given us divine support. The only reason Deeper Life has grown is because God Himself has given the growth.”**



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LESSON 586

SEVEN TRIBES RECEIVE INHERITANCE

Memory Verse: “And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein” (Joshua 21:43).

TEXT: Joshua 18:1-28; 19:1-51

The children of Israel had fought many battles. The Lord had been true and faithful to His promise that, no man would be able to withstand them in battles.

They had conquered many kings and the land was now subdued before them. **“And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there, And the land was subdued before them”** (verse 1). They were now faced with the need to divide and inherit their possession. From the knowledge gained in previous studies, we know that the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh had already received their inheritance (Joshua 13:7,8). Also, the tribe of Judah had received their inheritance (Joshua 15:1). The children of Joseph are divided into two tribes, namely, Manasseh and Ephraim. So, the tribes of Ephraim and the half-tribe of Manasseh had also received their inheritance (Joshua 16:1-5, 17:1, 7). **“And there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes, which had not yet received their inheritance”**. Our study today, therefore, focuses on how the remaining land was shared among the remaining seven tribes which were yet to receive their inheritance.

JOSHUA CHALLENGES ISRAEL TO POSSESS THE LAND: (Joshua 18: 1-10; 13:1; Psalm 2:8; Acts 1:8; 8:1-6).

“And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there. And the land was subdued before them” (verse 1). The whole assembly of the Israelites gathered at Shiloh and set up the tabernacle. The country was brought under their control. But there were still seven tribes who had not received their inheritance (verse 2).

Question 1: *Why were seven tribes yet to receive their inheritance?*

From our text, it seemed the children of Israel became satisfied with their level of victory and thus became complacent and indifferent about possessing all their inheritance. Seven tribes out of the twelve had not yet received their inheritance. They gathered and remained at Shiloh where they set up the tabernacle.

The tabernacle was a symbol of the presence of God, as well as a center of worship for the children of Israel. It was a figure that united the whole congregation together. Also, Shiloh had become a sacred place for them where they always assembled. However, the Israelites got so used to the joy and other benefits of assembling at Shiloh along with the tabernacle of worship to the point that they began to lose the urge to conquer and possess the remaining land which the Lord had given them to inherit.

Question 2: *How did Joshua react to the indifferent attitude of the Israelites towards possessing the remaining land?*

“And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, how long are ye slack to go to possess the land, which the LORD God of your fathers hath given you” (verse 3). Joshua challenged them to go and take possession of the land. He asked each tribe to appoint three men who would be sent out to make a survey of the land and write a description of it according to the inheritance of each. They were also to divide the land into seven parts. **“... That I may cast lots for you here before the LORD our God. But the Levites have no part among you; for the priesthood of the LORD is their inheritance”** (verses 6, 7). The appointed men went on their way to map out the land and write the description of it on a scroll, town by town, in seven parts, and then return to Joshua in the camp in Shiloh. Joshua will then cast lots for them in Shiloh **“before the LORD”** and divide the land according to their tribal divisions.

Question 3: *What lesson do we learn concerning the slackness of Israel to possess their inheritance with regards to soul-winning?*

Just as God promised Abraham to give the land to his descendants, so has He promised our Lord Jesus **“the heathen for thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession”**. And Christ, by extension, has passed this promise to His Church. Unfortunately, like the children of Israel, many believers in the church are slack and indifferent towards reaching the lost sinners and possessing the land for the Lord. The early church was also faced with this same situation of complacency. Rather than spreading to other parts, such as Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth as Christ commanded when He released the power of the Holy Ghost upon them, they remained in Jerusalem gathering daily in the temple. They got so used to the fellowship of being in one accord that they saw no need to reach out with the gospel to un-reached communities. For them, Jerusalem and the temple became their comfort zones.

The Holy Ghost had to use persecution as a means of moving them out of their comfort zones to preach to sinners. **“Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word”** (Acts 8:4). The same challenge comes to all Christian youths to come out of their ‘tabernacles or temples’ of worship and go to the nooks and crannies of their communities to preach the gospel. We must identify communities, streets, lanes, avenues, schools and youth-groups that have not been reached with the gospel. Also, as Joshua raised a team of people to survey and divide the land for onward possession, so must we raise evangelism teams among the youths. We must divide and allot the regions, districts, locations, streets, schools for evangelistic campaigns. We must make deliberate efforts to possess all the streets and schools for Christ by organizing crusades and evangelistic programs, and afterwards, establish youth fellowship centers such as school fellowships in the schools, Youth Bible Clubs in Streets and Youth Home Success Fellowship at appropriate places for converted youths to be brought to maturity in the Lord.

JOSHUA DIVIDES THE LAND FOR POSSESSION
(Joshua 18:11 – 28; 19:1-48; 1 Peter 1:2-5; 1 Corinthians

10:31-33; Psalm 16:8). **“And the lot of the tribe of the children of Benjamin came up according to their families; and the coast of their lot came forth between the children of Judah and the children of Joseph”** (verse 11). Joshua’s action in the allotment of the land to the different tribes shows his sincerity and transparency in dealing with people especially in spiritual matters. Firstly, he sent appointed representatives of each tribe to survey and divide the land into seven parts. This step eliminated the possibility of any tribe nursing grudges and feeling cheated. Secondly, the report of the division was brought to **“Shiloh before the LORD”** for divine approval. The division, though a physical activity, became sacred due to the Lord’s involvement. Thirdly, **“And Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the Lord”**. He did not in any way influence the choice or allotment of any tribe. Each tribe’s division was a result of the lot which fell to them. No wonder, there was no misgivings, grudges, misunderstanding or animosity among the people. What a worthy example for both leaders and Christian youths to emulate! All these, point to one thing: **“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: Even as I please all man in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved”** (1 Corinthians 10:31-33). As children of God, we must set the Lord before us in all things whether physical or spiritual.

The first lot came out for the tribe of Benjamin. Its boundaries began at the Jordan, passed the northern slope of Jericho and headed west into the hill country, coming out at the desert of Beth-aven. From there, it crossed to the south slope of Luz (that is, Bethel) and went down to Ataroth-addar on the hill south of lower Beth-horon. The description of the boundary of Benjamin in our text continues up to verse twenty – eight of chapter eighteen. Verses twenty-one to twenty-eight give us an enumeration of all the cities that fell to them. The boundaries of all the tribes were, in like manner, described in detail according to the survey that was made.

Question 4: *What does the detail description of the division of the land tell us about God?*

Our God pays attention to details. Even in the story of creation, a day by day and step by step description is given on how God created all things in an orderly manner. Now, we see how the allotment of the land was done in an orderly manner. The boundaries of each tribe were clearly described in detail. This teaches us as Christian youths to be detailed and orderly in whatever we do. Things should not be done disorderly whether in spiritual or academic matters. Even in our domestic life, we must allow the word of God to regulate how things should be done. The detailed description of the land by the appointed representative of the tribe actually made it possible and easy for Joshua to take appropriate decision. Those who are given assignments to carry out must be thorough, giving detailed report for leadership to easily work with in order to ensure progress of what is done. The Scripture enjoins us to “**Let all things be done unto edifying**” (1 Corinthians 14:26). The second lot was for the tribe of Simeon, the third for Zebulun, the fourth for Issachar and the fifth for the tribe of Asher. The sixth lot favored the tribe of Naphtali and the seventh for Dan.

Question 5: *What are believers’ inheritances today?*

Beyond the physical possession of lands and materials things, God has purchased for us spiritual and eternal inheritance through our Lord Jesus Christ. Believers’ inheritance include partaking in the divine nature through sanctification (2 Peter 1:2 – 4), the promise of the Father (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8), the gifts of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:7- 12), the grace of God (Romans 5:17) and eternal inheritance (John 14:1–3; Revelation 21:7). Believers should not concentrate all attention on earthly things because their inheritance transcend this realm. Christ has reserved better things for us. “**To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you**” (1 Peter 1:4).

Question 6: *How can sinning youths partake of believers’ inheritance?*

God is gracious to all and has made His grace to appear to all (Titus 2:11). Sinning youth can also be partakers with the saints of God by repenting of their sins and accepting Christ into their hearts by faith. By so doing, they will inherit the salvation of God which He has promised to as many as truly repent of their sins. **“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord”** (Acts 3:19). All who remain in sin do not have any inheritance in the kingdom of God. They stand the danger of eternal damnation in hell fire (Ephesians 5:5). All believers, including youths, must strive for their inheritances in Christ. Christ, through His vicarious sacrifice, has made available all things that pertain to life and godliness. Christian youths must know what is the riches of the glory of the inheritance in Christ (Ephesians 1:18). Like the tribe of Dan, they must, by the whole amour of God, possess their possessions.

JOSHUA’S EXEMPLARY LEADERSHIP STYLE (Joshua 19:49-51; 1:1, 26)

“When they had made an end of dividing the land for inheritance by their coasts, the children of Israel gave an inheritance to Joshua the son of Nun among them” (verse 49). Joshua patiently waited till all the tribes were settled in their respective inheritance before considering himself. He put the service of the Lord above his personal convenience. He never lost focus of the commission that the Lord gave him when He called him. The Lord had specifically commanded him to settle the people in their inheritance. **“Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them”** (Joshua 1:6). Joshua was never distracted from this divinely given goal and mission. He was contented to see them all placed in their respective possessions.

As believers, we must prefer the welfare of others to our private advantage. Those in leadership positions should see Joshua’s attitude as a model to emulate. We must be mindful of the main goal and mission that the Lord has given to us. As a Christian youth, when you are given a leadership responsibility at home, in school or in any situation, do not

take advantage of your juniors. **“Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock”** (1Peter 5:3). Make use of the privilege to exhibit gracious conducts and godly virtues that people would commend and like to emulate. Be compassionate, considerate, self-denying and hospitable. Like Joshua, serve others; **“in honor preferring one another.”** Such exemplary lifestyle will attract divine honor and promotion just as the Lord blessed Joshua (Joshua 19:50). It is also instructive to note that Joshua’s inheritance was in accordance to the word of the Lord. **“According to the word of the Lord they gave him the city which he asked, even Timnathserah in mount Ephraim: and he built the city, and dwelt therein.”** Joshua did not multiply cities and towns for himself and members of his family. Rather, he inherited only the portion which the Lord gave to him. Also, the portion of his inheritance was within that of his tribe – Ephraim. He did not ask all the tribes to give him cities to inherit.

Finally, we also see that the children of Israel expressed or demonstrated a grateful attitude towards Joshua, their leader. Christian youths should cultivate the habit of expressing gratitude and appreciation to their parents, leaders, teachers and those who, in one way or the other, have been instrumental to their blessings, success and progress.

LESSON 587

RENEWED CHARGE TO APPOINT CITIES OF REFUGE

Memory Verse: “The LORD also spake unto Joshua, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses” (Joshua 20:1, 2).

TEXT: Joshua 20:1-9

The command to build the cities of refuge among the children of Israel is coming to them again after they have all been allotted their portion of land in Canaan.

God told them specifically what to do with those cities. The children of Israel, in obedience to this instruction, appointed cities of refuge for themselves. The cities of refuge are an allegory of the redemption we have in Christ today. We also have a lot to learn from the principles in the administration of those cities.

THE DEMAND FOR CITIES OF REFUGE (Joshua 20:1, 2; Exodus 34:1; Deuteronomy 12:32; Proverbs 24:21; 30:6; Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8).

“The LORD also spake unto Joshua, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses” (verses 1, 2). It was an initiative of God that the children of Israel should appoint for themselves cities of refuge. This instruction came to them while they were still wandering in the wilderness. **“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come over Jordan into the land of Canaan; Then ye shall appoint you cities to be cities of refuge for you; that the slayer may flee thither, which killeth any person at unawares”** (Numbers 35:9-11). Redemption plan then and now is entirely God’s making. No one can get saved by his own device (Psalm 49:6-9). If anyone would get saved, it has to be through God’s way. Otherwise, it becomes a self-righteous effort

which usually would produce no justification from God (Romans 10:3).

Question 1: Outline God's way for our redemption from sin.

All the sins we have committed before hearing the gospel, we need to take the following Bible ordained steps: acknowledge and confess sins (Psalm 32:5); repent and forsake them (Acts 17:30); then believe on the Savior, Jesus Christ (Romans 3:24, 25).

Question 2: What lesson can we learn from the reminder on appointing the cities of refuge?

At this time, the Israelites were already in the land God promised them. Hence, a reminder was served. God did not change His original plan. It is important to note that God does not change His will with passage of time. When Moses broke the table of the law first given to him, God said to him, “**...Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest**” (Exodus 34:1). He would give the word as “**in the first tables**”! He had strictly commanded the Israelites never to add to or change His instructions. Any change to it renders it impotent and makes the agent of such change a liar.

How may we apply this to our lives today? The Bible, though has been for centuries, should not be changed in its content for any reason. Everything should be left as “**in the first**”. Any change would bring damnation and eternal pain on the person who does it regardless of his status (Revelations 22:18, 19). Further to this is the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ does not change. All the good He had ever done when He was physically on earth, He still could, and indeed, does today.

THE DETAILS ON CITIES OF REFUGE (Joshua 20:3-6; Numbers 35:9-25, 30; Deuteronomy 17:6, 7; 1 Timothy 5:19).

“That the slayer that killeth any person unawares and unwittingly may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood. And when he that doth flee unto one of those cities shall stand at

the entering of the gate of the city, and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them” (Verses 3, 4). We should note that the cities were for **“the slayer that killeth any person unawares and unwittingly”**. The point had been explained to them by Moses that any form of accidental killing which had no premeditations or any form of malicious feelings, should not be judged as murder. The avenger of blood who was just anyone on mission to see justice done to the killer should leave the matter and rest from his pursuit the moment it was established that it was an accident. As a matter of fact, he should let the judges of the city where the killer fled grant him fair hearing and cross-examine him. This idea was to discourage jungle justice which often leads to the death of innocent people.

Question 3: What can we learn from the immediate cover provided by the city of refuge?

When anything has happened, God does not want us to begin to judge and act on the basis of feelings and outburst of negative emotions. Doing so might lead to a miscarriage of justice. We might make innocent people suffer for an offence they did not commit. However, in the process of thorough investigation, not only that our emotions cool off but we will also have more information that will help in taking better decisions.

The elders of the cities of refuge were charged seriously that **“...if the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver the slayer up into his hand... And he shall dwell in that city, until he stand before the congregation for judgment”**; and if found not guilty, he should remain in the city **“until the death of the high priest that shall be in those days: then shall the slayer return, and come unto his own city, and unto his own house, unto the city from whence he fled”**. We should learn from Christ and see that whoever comes to Him is not cast away (John 6:37). People who are spiritually blind and ignorant of God’s righteousness can now come to God through Christ.

Question 4: *What should be our attitude to those who come for refuge in Christ?*

Also, the church should receive anyone who had been living in ignorance but has now come to seek refuge in the fold of Christ. We should not release them into the harsh condition from which they seek to escape through negligence or lack of care. Through our prayers and encouragement, we are to protect people who are genuinely born again but have to suffer for some things they had done ignorantly in the past. For example, if your friend who has just got converted owns up to an offence in school and he is being punished for it, pray for him to be able to stand and never reconsider his decision to always do the right regardless of the cost. If we dissociate from or make fun of him/her, we are pushing him/her back into sin and all its unpalatable consequences.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF CITIES OF REFUGE (Joshua 20:7-9; Numbers 35:13-15; 1 Timothy 2:3, 4; 2 Peter 3:9; Matthew 4:17; Titus 2:11,12).

In the land of Canaan, **“And they appointed Kedesh in Galilee in mount Naphtali, and Shechem in mount Ephraim, and Kirjatharba, which is Hebron, in the mountain of Judah”** (Verse 7). Also, **“...on the other side Jordan by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness upon the plain out of the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan out of the tribe of Manasseh”** (Verse 8). It is worthy of note that anywhere the children of Israel were, there was a city very accessible and close to them. God wanted everyone to benefit from the saving plan from the avenger of blood. The cities were widely distributed so that they were **“appointed for all the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them”!**

Question 5: *What can we learn from the wide distribution of the cities of refuge?*

God does not want any sinner to die but that they should repent and be saved. Hence, he has made salvation close enough to everyone who would like to be saved. He has made His grace available to all men. Sinning youths should

therefore take advantage of the full and free salvation which has been made available through Christ. They should sincerely repent of their sins and embrace the grace of God. **“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men”** (Titus 2:11).

LESSON 588

INHERITANCE OF THE LEVITES

Memory Verse: *“And the children of Israel gave unto the Levites out of their inheritance, at the commandment of the LORD, these cities and their suburbs”* (Joshua 21:3).

TEXT: Joshua 21:1-45

At this time, the children of Israel had started settling into the Promised Land which had been divided to each tribe as the Lord commanded. However, the Levites and priests who were the ministers of the Lord were yet to be settled in their respective places where they were meant to dwell and teach the people the way of God. Our text today explains how the Levites requested to be given their places as well as how the land was taken from the portion of each tribe to settle the Levites who were positioned among all the tribes. The Levites, being separated for the service of the Lord, got a place in each tribe.

Question 1: *Why were the Levites separated into all the tribes of Israel?*

The children of Israel had come into a covenant of fellowship with God and the Lord wanted them to continue with the relationship. He therefore positioned His servants (the Levites) in all the places where the people lived. This would enable Israel to be close to the ministers. As youths, the Lord wants us to be in the assembly of believers where we have access to various ministrations of His ministers, so that we can maintain our relationship with Him. **“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching”** (Hebrews 10:25). We should be excited to attend programs such as weekly services, School Fellowship, Youth Home Success Fellowship and retreats where we fellowship with other believers of like precious faith. In addition, leaders of the youth should ensure they make themselves

available for the youths to have access to them for spiritual enlightenment and nourishment.

INSTRUCTIVE REQUEST OF THE LEVITES TO ISRAEL: (Joshua 21:1, 2; 18: 1–10; Numbers 35: 1–8; Romans 4:13–20; Hebrews 10:36; 2 Peter 3:9).

“Then came near the heads of the fathers of the Levites unto Eleazar the priest, and unto Joshua the son of Nun, and unto the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel” (verse 1). The manner in which the heads of the Levites approached the leadership of Israel to ask for the promised inheritance has a lot of lessons for youths today. They had previously been promised by the Lord through Moses saying, **“Command the children of Israel, that they give unto the Levites of the inheritance of their possession cities to dwell in; and ye shall give also unto the Levites suburbs for the cities round about them”** (Numbers 35:2). As Joshua divided the land, they decided to send their representatives to approach Eleazar the priest and Joshua to request for their own portion of the land as commanded by God. They had trust in God that His promise would not fail and also depended on the leadership to carry out their requests.

Question 2: *What lessons can we learn from the approach of the heads of the Levites in making their request?*

“And they spake unto them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, saying, The LORD commanded by the hand of Moses to give us cities to dwell in, with the suburbs thereof for our cattle”(verse 2). As youths, we should learn from the approach of these Levites. Whenever God gives us a promise, we should not fret or worry whether it would come to pass or not. If it involves meeting our leaders, we should be free to do so. God will fulfil His promises as we patiently wait like the Levites (Hebrews 6:12). In making a request for our rights, we should be orderly and respectful to leadership. These leaders did not accuse Joshua of denying them their right and cause a commotion. The Levites also chose people to represent them rather than everyone approaching Joshua. The Levites did not backbite or murmur against their leaders

but came to them to remind them of the promise of God. Youths are not to backbite, murmur or get involved in side talks that would hurt other people. Rather, when we are worried about certain things in the church, we should go to our leaders and make them aware of our concerns. Finally, we learn not to live or remain in ignorance.

Whenever we do not know which direction to take or if we are at a cross road, we should go to our leaders who will be able to guide us. Youths should also be able to approach fellow youths who are good at certain subjects to help them when they are having challenges with some of their subjects in school.

INHERITANCE RE- ALLOCATED TO THE LEVITES: (Joshua 21: 3–42; Numbers 4:15-20; 18:1–6; Ephesians 1: 17-23; Colossians 3: 23, 24).

After the presentation of the request of the leadership of the Levites, Joshua and all Israel did not argue but rather obeyed the command of the Lord. **“And the children of Israel gave unto the Levites out of their inheritance, at the commandment of the LORD, these cities and their suburbs”** (verse 3). Israel obeyed and reallocated the suburbs and other lands to the priests and the Levites. The personal interest of the other tribes did not overshadow their willingness to give the Levites the land apportioned to them by Joshua. As Christian youths, we should be willing to sacrifice for the good of our brethren. In school, we should be ready to teach others, share our textbooks with them and support them from our pocket money when necessary. However, youths should be careful to avoid giving from their school fees or helping each other to their own hurt or destruction. That is, if anyone is in need of help which is beyond their ability, they could refer such to a more matured person such as pastors or their own Christian parents. Helping to teach your classmate in the exam hall is crossing the border of acceptable assistance to cheating, which has earthly and eternal regrettable consequences. The division of the land was done in such a way that those families with similar responsibilities in the tabernacle were on the same lot. This was accepted by everyone without any prejudice. We do not also have any

record of any of the Levites fighting to be given any choice land. For them, it was a time of service and they knew that they were being allocated the land due to the responsibility they had. The Levites who were descendants of Aaron the priest were given the cities closest to Jerusalem because their responsibilities required them to be close to the temple (verses 4, 9–19). The descendants of Kohath, who was the second son of Levi received their inheritance in the hill country (Genesis 46: 11). They were appointed to bear the Ark and the Ark was located in the hill country (verses 5, 20–26; Numbers 4:15).

The descendants of Gershon, the first son of Levi were responsible for the tabernacle’s coverings and other textiles and were allocated the cities in the North (verses 6, 27– 33; Numbers 4:24–26). Merari’s descendants were from the third son of Levi and they were guards of the tabernacle and transported its frames (Numbers 4:29–33). They were allocated lands in the cities of Zebulun, Reuben and Gad (verses 7, 34–40).

Question 3: *What inheritance should believers aspire to have?*

Though the Levites were apportioned physical lands from the Lord, today, believers and ministers are not expected to fight for earthly inheritance. The Lord wants everyone to set his “... **affection on things above, not on things on the earth**” (Colossians 3:2). The unsaved first needs to repent and change their way of life before they can aspire to this eternal inheritance. The inheritance that God gives is eternal, incorruptible, for only the pure and holy and it is the abode of God. **“To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you”** (1 Peter 1:4).

ISRAELITES’ REST FROM THE LORD (Joshua 21:43-45; 1: 3, 13).

Israel, while journeying to the Promised Land, had fought many battles. Though they were not initially trained to be soldiers, the oppositions they faced from their enemies and the need to capture the lands ahead of them, many of them had gotten involved in battles. In spite of lack of

experience of the men of war involved from the side of Israel, they were able to defeat all their enemies who are trained in the art of warfare. **“And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein”** (Joshua 21:43). God, in whom Israel trusted, was able to give them victory in battle. He also made them to possess the land which He had promised to Abraham centuries earlier.

Question 4: *What do we learn from Israel's dependence on the Lord?*

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:5). When we put our trust and confidence in the Lord, He will always direct and lead us to the right track. Israel depended on the Lord and had victories. **“And the LORD gave them rest round about, according to all that he swore unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand”** (Joshua 21:44). No man was able to stand before them. Anyone who depends on God will not be disappointed. Youths should know that God can overcome any barrier, enemy or challenge that they face. **“There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass”** (Joshua 21:45). Whatever God has promised you, He will definitely fulfill it in His time as He did for Israel. **“God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good”** (Numbers 23:19). Put your trust in the Lord and He will give you rest, peace and joy. God will give peace and rest here on earth and will also give eternal rest in heaven. **“There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God...Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief”** (Hebrews 4:9, 11).

LESSON 589

THE ALTAR OF WITNESS

Memory Verse: “And the children of Reuben and the children of Gad called the altar Ed: for it shall be a witness between us that the LORD is God” (Joshua 22:10).

TEXT: Joshua 22:1-34

The book of Joshua contains a lot of interesting events. In this book, the unlimited power and attribute of God as a Man of war was displayed. We see the infallible armor, God displaced great nations: even nations which were renowned and powerful. **“And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight”** (Numbers 13:33).

It is also in this same book that God’s faithfulness in keeping covenant came to a climax as Israel actually possessed the promise land. God’s ability in bringing the posterity of Abraham into the Promised Land after centuries had passed gives us the assurance He will fulfil all that He promises to us. This should strengthen contemporary believers whose hope is in God. In today’s lesson, we are going to see the faithfulness and commitment of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half tribe of Manasseh earlier settled before Jordan. They kept to their promises as they fought alongside the nine and half tribes till victory was secured. Afterward, they were sent home by Joshua. We shall see also how they made an altar of Witness.

THE RETURN OF THE VICTORS (Joshua 22:1-10; Numbers 32; 17; 2 Samuel 10:11; Jude 1:3; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

“And now the LORD your God hath given rest unto your brethren, as he promised them: therefore now return ye, and get you unto your tents, and unto the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side Jordan” (verse 4). The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh were released to go into their possession by Joshua after a long

time of warring. They kept to the promise made to Moses. **“And they came near unto him, and said, we will build sheepfolds here for our cattle, and cities for our little ones: But we ourselves will go ready armed before the children of Israel, until we have brought them unto their place: and our little ones shall dwell in the fenced cities because of the inhabitants of the land. We will not return unto our houses, until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance”** (Numbers 32:16-18).

Question 1: What are some of the lessons learnt from the faithfulness of these tribes to their promise?

Fighting against the Canaanites was not an easy task. It involved so many risks. Example of the risk was the defeat they recorded at Ai, where some Israelites were killed. It is normal for someone to take such risk when it is directly beneficial to him. What happens when you have settled in your own inheritance? Can you endanger your life for the sake of others? The Reubenites, Gadites and half tribe of Manasseh did that. There was no record of any of them excusing himself or herself from duty to go and see their loved ones. They fought with all their might and endured till the land was conquered. Christian youths should learn from this attribute and be committed to others' salvation, success, comfort, peace, happiness, etc. Remember that there are Christians suffering persecutions and passing through other trials elsewhere. We should be praying for them earnestly. Do not relent your efforts until victory of others over the enemies is achieved. Do not get tired in praying, preaching, helping and serving others. Christ has called us to such service. The tribes of Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh were guided by Joshua through the word of God when sent to their own inheritance. He encouraged them to continue in the word and fear of God. Sometimes, youths wonder why they are always guided and guarded by their parents, guardians and leaders. The feeling of *“I am of age and knows what to do,”* goes on in their heart. No matter how you feel, there is still need for divine guidance in this perverted and crooked world. These tribes consisted of adults who were reminded of the

condition for rest, security, blessing and peace - obedience and complete service to God without reservation.

Question 2: *Did Reuben, Gad, and half tribe of Manasseh go with blessings to their possession?*

“So Joshua blessed them, and sent them away: and they went unto their tents” (verse 6). Indeed, Joshua blessed them apart from their portion of the spoils of the enemies. Faithfulness to our promises of serving the Lord is rewardable here on earth and in eternity. It is an avenue for us to experience the power of God in our lives. We also obtain unquenchable joy as we go from one victory to another. God’s delights and love are on all that serve Him. There are unlimited blessings of divine upliftment, protection, provision, preservation, promotion and favor for the faithful.

Christians are still fighting a spiritual war today. God expects us to fight manfully onward.

Question 3: *How does God expect saved youths to fight the battles before them?*

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 1:3). Saved youths are to earnestly contend for the faith against falsehood and dead religion. We are to fight against sin (Romans 6:12); preach against sin and lead others to Christ (2 Timothy 4:2); edify the body of Christ (Ephesians 6:12); and work and pray for the unity of the church in doctrine and conduct (Ephesians 4:13).

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE ALTAR OF WITNESS: (Joshua 22:1-5, 21-29; Genesis 31:44-46, 52; Deuteronomy 13:12-14; 4:26; Matthew 5:34,37; James 5:12,20; 1 Peter 2:12).

After the Reubenites, Gadites and half tribe of Manasseh were sent home by Joshua, they later built an altar which came to the knowledge of other tribes of Israel.

Question 4: *How did the children hear this news?*

“And when the children of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered themselves together at Shiloh, to go up to war against them. And the children of Israel sent unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the half tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead, Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, And with him ten princes, of each chief house a prince throughout all the tribes of Israel; and each one was an head of the house of their fathers among the thousands of Israel” (verses 12-14). It was not recorded here who brought the news to the children of Israel, the most important thing is that they heard it. But one of them did. The lesson here is that whenever any believer is backsliding, attempt should be made by fervent ones to bring him back again. Once you discover that a born again youth is going astray, you should report to your leader. No one should cover sin for the fear of being misunderstood. **“Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins”** (James 5:20).

Question 5: *Why did they make an Altar of witness?*

“But that it may be a witness between us, and you, and our generations after us, that we might do the service of the LORD before him with our burnt offerings, and with our sacrifices, and with our peace offerings; that your children may not say to our children in time to come, Ye have no part in the LORD” (verse 27). The reason for their action was to preserve their 1posterity in the common wealth of Israel.

They did not want physical boundaries to exclude them from divine inheritance. What a challenge to the Christian youth! This is the concern of the church leadership and godly parents. As they contend for the faith, their desire is for their own children to be partakers of divine inheritance in Christ. Youths should understand why they are monitored, guided and instructed at home, church and school. They need to respond positively to the call to salvation and holy living. Youth’s concern should not only be for themselves

alone, they should obey God and preserve godly posterity. In our time, we are not to build any altar of witness, but to be honest in our dealings with God and people everywhere. **“Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men (2 Corinthians 8: 21).** We should be known by our acts and conducts that we are real Christians. Christ command to believers is that our **“communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil” (Matthew 5:37).** We should redeem every righteous promise made without failing.

THE REACTION OF THE OTHER TRIBES (Joshua 22:16-20, 30-37; Deuteronomy 13:1-15; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; Timothy 5:20).

When the news came to Joshua and the children of Israel, they did not take rash decision. They followed the procedures in the Law of Moses by carrying out investigation immediately. **“If thou shalt hear say in one of thy cities, which the LORD thy God hath given thee to dwell there, saying, Certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which ye have not known; Then shalt thou enquire, and make search, and ask diligently; and, behold, if it be truth, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought among you” (Deuteronomy 13:12-14).** This same pattern should be followed by the church. There should be a thorough investigation on every sin-related matter and appropriate action should be taken. After investigating, it was found out that the Altar made was that of witness.

Question 6: What lesson do we learn from the manner in which the Israelites handled this matter?

The way the children of Israel handled this case teaches us great lessons: One, they followed the scriptural pattern which should be emulated in the church. Two, the children of Israel raised a panel of trusted people to carry out the investigation. The church and school fellowships should borrow a leaf from this. Three, the people sent were good

listeners. They were not pursuing personal agenda with sentiment. They patiently listened to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh. This is worthy of emulation. At the end, there was profound joy from both sides. This is true love in action. It is also noteworthy that the tribe of Reuben, Gad, and half tribe of Manasseh did not feel offended over this accusation. They knew their motive was right; yet, so, they were patient to explain their motive to the panel of investigation. What a lesson to the youths! There is no need getting offended when misunderstood. As born again children of God, we are not to lose our virtue of patience, gentleness and others because we are wrongly accused. We are to patiently explain till we are clearly understood. That is Christianity. Also, we should maintain good communication channels with our parents and leaders concerning what we do. **“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation”** (Hebrews 13:7).

LESSON 590

JOSHUA'S FAREWELL MESSAGE

Memory Verse: "Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left" (Joshua 23:6).

TEXT: Joshua 23:1-16

The life and ministry of Joshua was gradually coming to an end. He had served the Lord faithfully, fervently and fruitfully from the time of his call and commission by God. At this time, he was about one hundred and ten years old (Joshua 24:29). As a leader, he found it necessary to call all the Israelites to encourage, strengthen and warn them on the need to wholly follow the Lord. From this farewell message to Israel, he pointed out three things that would enable them to continue in the blessings of God.

Question 1: What are the demands God made to the children of Israel in our text?

These are: (1) complete obedience to the word of God (verse 6); (2) continuous separation from the Canaanite nations (verse 7) and (3) cleaving to the Lord with real and fervent love (verses 8-11). The response of the people was very encouraging. They said, "... **unto Joshua, the LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey**" (Joshua 24:24).

FAREWELL MESSAGE FROM A FAITHFUL LEADER (Joshua 23:1-5; 21:43-45; 22:4; Acts 20:17-38; Ephesians 1:3).

"And Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God" (verse 1). The life and ministry of Joshua is great and challenging to us today. Since the time he was called and commissioned, he consistently followed the Lord.

Question 2: What are the lessons we can learn from the life of Joshua?

“As the LORD commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all that the LORD commanded Moses” (Joshua 11:15). Joshua was a strong military and spiritual leader with God’s power. His life is a challenge to us in this generation. (1) He was an obedient servant of the Lord. He was committed to obeying God in every matter (Joshua 7:13, 16, 17, 22, 26). (2) He was a faithful minister of God. (3) He was a fervent and prayerful man of God. Through his prayer, God did the incredible when he commanded the sun and the moon to stay for the children of Israel to conquer their enemies (Joshua 10:12-14). (4) He was powerful in faith. Through his faith in God and His word, the walls of Jericho fell (Hebrews 11:30). (5) He was a holy man of God. He separated himself from sin and evil. (6) He was submissive to God and His word. The key to his success was his submission to God who called and commissioned him for this great task. When God spoke, he listened and obeyed immediately. He is a model to Christian youths today. (7) He was hardworking in everything he did (Joshua 8:32, 34, 35). (8) Joshua was bold and courageous in facing all the enemy-nations in battles (Joshua 10:6-9). (9) He was consecrated and committed to the service of the Lord (Joshua 8:26). (10) He was full of the Spirit of wisdom from God (Deuteronomy 34:9).

God used this great leader to give rest to His people and the people also served the Lord faithfully during Joshua’s time. **“And Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the LORD, that he had done for Israel”** (Joshua 24:31). It is not only Joshua that should possess these qualities. We should seek the face of the Lord, who will give spiritual virtues to all liberally, in prayer of faith.

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (James 1:5).

In his farewell message to the people, Joshua called them to remember how the Lord fought for them. Today, we should know that we cannot fight the battles of life with fleshly weapons. **“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds”** (2 Corinthians 10:4). Therefore, we should bring our battles before God in prayer. He will defeat all our enemies. In recalling God’s power in battle, we see His faithfulness. God is faithful to His word in every generation. Trust Him and His word, you will never fear, fail or fall.

Question 3: *In what areas does God expect faithfulness from us?*

On the other hand, God also expects His people to be faithful to Him. **“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”** (1 Corinthians 4:1, 2). Faithfulness is the hallmark of obedience and it is one of the basic qualities of character required of the servants of God. One, our faithfulness finds expression in our devotion to God. When we are faithful, we will devotedly serve God and be committed to His word (Romans 14:8). Two, faithfulness to God demands obedience to Him in life and ministry. We should not carry out God’s work anyhow but work for Him in the way He has commanded in His word. Three, faithfulness to God requires truthfulness in all things. As Christian youths, we have a duty to be truthful in everything we do. Four, faithfulness to God requires active service to Him. Lip-service without devotion and consecration avail nothing. God desires that we get into the battle-field of preaching the gospel that can deliver souls from hell without hesitation.

“And the LORD your God, he shall expel them from before you, and drive them from out of your sight; and ye shall possess their land, as the LORD your God hath promised unto you” (verse 5). In his message, Joshua pointed the people to the promises of God. When we believe and stand on the promises of God, He responds by demonstrating His power to bring His promises to fulfilment. The testimony in Joshua’s days was: **“There**

failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass” (Joshua 21:45). All the promises of God came to pass. God is still faithfully fulfilling His promises today. Jesus said: **“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away”** (Matthew 24:35).

Question 4: *Mention the promises of God for specific areas of your life.*

“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:3, 4). The promises of God cover all aspects of our lives. It covers spiritual, academic and physical life. It takes prayer, personal faith in God and patience to claim these promises. **“That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises”** (Hebrews 6:12).

EXHORTATION TO STEADFASTNESS AND OBEDIENCE TO GOD (Joshua 23:6-11; 1 Samuel 15:22; 2 Chronicles 15:7, 8; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Galatians 5:1)

In view of the faithfulness of God to Israel and the necessity of continuing with the Lord, Joshua, an old man now, challenged them to be steadfast in their walk with God. The basis of the demand he made on the people was because of God’s faithfulness to them. Having recalled how God fought for them in the past, drove out great and strong nations, gave them their lands for an inheritance and faithfully kept His promises to them, he then called them to steadfastness and obedience to God. He expects that this faithfulness of God should inspire them to greater devotion to Him. Joshua therefore called Israel to their duty. **“Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the Law of Moses that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left”** (verse 6).

Question 5: *What practical things must we do to be steadfast and obedient to the Lord?*

Just as God has been faithful in blessing Israel, He has also been faithful in bestowing His blessings upon us. These include: salvation and peace, sanctification and purity, Holy Spirit power, daily grace to live the Christian life and protection, fellowship of the saints, material-provisions, etc. From the above, God therefore requires us to take some practical steps to be steadfast and obedient. Firstly, God seeks the devotion of our hearts. Devotion is an inward, spiritual, prayerful and personal walk with God whereby we seek to please Him. Secondly, God delights in seeing us maintain prompt and complete obedience to Him. For this is the only acceptable expression of the devotion we profess. This is the reason why Joshua exhorted the people to be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the Law of Moses. It takes courage to obey God and live a holy life. Thirdly, God loves purity. The people were exhorted to avoid defilement from Canaanite nations. All sinful pleasures and amusement that are not consistent with pure devotion to God cause separation between us and Him. The only remedy is total separation from evil. **“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you”** (2 Corinthians 6:17).

CONSEQUENCES OF COMPROMISE AND DISOBEDIENCE TO GOD (Joshua 23:12-16; Deuteronomy 28:15; Jeremiah 3:11-14, 3; Revelation 3:3)

“Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you” (verse 13). What if Israel slumped back into the sins of the nation’s God rooted out of the land? If the children of Israel developed intimate relationship with idolaters, intermarried with them and served their idols, there will be great consequences.

Question 6: *What are the consequences of backsliding?*

“Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul” (Hebrews 10:38, 39). Backsliding leads to loss of eternal life. **“And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book”** (Exodus 32:33). The backslider stands the risk of facing the wrath of God and divine displeasure. Therefore, Joshua warned of the danger of being trapped, ensnared and scourged by the heathen if they turned back from following the Lord. **“When ye have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you”** (verse 16). Be warned! The only antidote to backsliding is complete obedience and steadfastness in following the Lord till you see Him in glory. **“But that which ye have already hold fast till I come”** (Revelation 2:25).

LESSON 591

EXHORTATION TO CHRIST-LIKE LIVING

Memory Verse: *“Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye” (Colossians 3:1).*

TEXT: Romans 15:1-22

Paul the apostle in the preceding chapter, spoke about believers who are weak in the faith and the scriptural sacrifice strong believers need to make for their mutual benefit and sustenance in grace. His exhortation was that individuals should bury their peculiar interests and focus on doing things that could edify others. He pointed out that this was what Christ did to bring us to the level we are.

Question 1: *What should be the attitude of spiritually strong believers to the weak in the faith?*

This attitude of Paul is expressed and commended in the sermon of Jesus Christ on the mount. **“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God”** (Matthew 5:9). It should be our responsibility, as God’s children, to exercise self-control as well as be proactive in strengthening believers who show signs of spiritual weakness. Moreover, he explained that Christ was a gift to the whole of humanity and also expressed his joy in the opportunity which he had to serve.

THE EXHORTATION TO CHRIST-LIKE FORBEARANCE (Romans 15:1-7; 14:1-3, 19-21; Galatians 6:1, 2; Proverbs 10:12; 1 Peter 4:8; Ephesians 4:2; 1 John 2:10).

“We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification” (verses 1). **“We then that are strong”**, in actual sense, was referring to the strength of faith in relation to what type of meat to eat or not, or which day of the week was to be most holy. The ‘strong’ here refers to mature believers who did not bother about which animal was clean or unclean.

They ate any kind of meat without condemnation. It also did not infringe on their conscience whether a day (of course the Sabbath) was to be special or not. On the other hand, the weak refers to new converts who get bothered by such things. The responsibility for the strong is that they “**ought to bear the infirmities of the weak**”. It is a must. In the original, the word “**bear**” could mean ‘to bear with’ or ‘to endure patiently’ or ‘not to contend with’.

When we see people who share opinions different from ours in matters that do not border on righteousness or unrighteousness, we should not make an issue of it but bear with them. That is to say, that we should not see ourselves as being better while we see them as being worse off. Such matters regarding our personal standard of life as to how long we should sleep, how much we eat, how frequently or loudly we should laugh and talk, or how long our quiet time should be. If you have acquired table manner, it should not be the basis for your choice of who a serious Christian is.

We are admonished “**not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor**”. The apostle Paul does not mean to indulge someone in sin but to bear with him on something that is “**for his good to edification**”. We should not make people unnecessarily sad or feel worthless when we could avoid it at no expense of holiness. When we have common task to do and it appears we are stronger to do much more than they could do, we do not need to make a general rule that they would not be able to cope with. We are to deny ourselves in order to create chances for the joy and edification of other believers we interact with. Christ also did that. He endured the reproaches of the enemies of God the Father in order to please Him or make Him happy. “**For even Christ pleased not himself...**” (Verse 3). We are to learn from these things.

Question 2: What is the consequence of focusing on each other's weaknesses?

When we do not bear one with another, the result is disunity and separation one from another. That is, when we focus on emphasizing the errors and faults (not necessarily sins) of one another, we are torn apart (Proverbs 17:9). If we

must talk about the faults of others at all, we must be nice and constructive about how we do it; otherwise, that can also lead to division (Proverbs 16:28; Isaiah 65:5). If, on the other hand, we are mindful of how we treat one another, with patience and forbearance, the result will be unity. **“Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”** (verses 5, 6). Therefore, we are admonished, **“... receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God”** (verse 7).

An important ingredient to make this kind of Christ- like forbearance achievable in our lives is love. **“And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins”** (1Peter 4:8).

THE EXPLANATION OF GENTILES’ BENEFITS IN CHRIST (Romans 15:8-16; Acts 15:7-11; Galatians 3:26-28; 6:15; Ephesians 2:11-18; Revelation 5:9; 7:9, 10).

“Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers” (verse 8). Paul confirms that Jesus Christ was given to the Jews as a means of confirming the promises that God gave to the 1 patriarchs. Paul said, **“promises”** because Christ was promised in different ways to their patriarchs: to Abraham, He was the **“seed”** (Galatians 3:16); to Moses and the congregation of Israel that made it to Canaan, He was the **“Prophet”** (Deuteronomy 18:15; Acts 3: 22) and to the captive Israelites, He was promised as **“the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ”** (Daniel 9:25; John 1:41). But God offers much more than through for Christ.

“And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name” (verse 9). The Gentiles were in God’s plan to obtain **“his mercy”** and he wanted the Roman church, which comprised both Jews and Gentiles to understand the plan of God. Then, to buttress this point, Paul mentioned prophecies concerning the salvation of the Gentiles. It was discovered that the

Gentiles would rejoice **“with His people”** (i.e. the Jews) as one congregation. Also, all Gentiles and all people would praise His name and Christ, **“a root of Jesse”** shall reign over the Gentiles and that they shall **“trust”** in Him (verses 10-12).

His reason for this explanation was to boost the joy and the hope of those demoralized Gentiles and to educate the Jewish Christians to also share in this hope. **“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost”** (verse 13). He thought they should be good and knowledgeable enough to admonish one another but took it as his responsibility to educate them, being their leader. He took a step further to say that he was appointed a minister to the Gentiles so that, the Gentiles could make acceptable sacrifices to God. This was a figure of speech to depict that God has the Gentiles at heart as much as He does the Jews.

Question 3: Which nation or tribe of people is marked for God’s salvation plan?

All nations of the earth are marked for God’s salvation plan (Matthew 28:18-20). We have various passages in the Bible which confirm that God has given opportunities to the Gentiles to partake of His saving grace and heavenly kingdom. God purifies the converted Gentiles and baptizes them with the Holy Spirit just as those Jews who became Christians. By the death of Christ on the cross, there is reconciliation with God. Then, there shall be an assembly of all nations - both the Jews and Gentile - in heaven. This is to establish the fact that God wants to save men of all nations and tribes.

THE EXPRESSION OF GLORYING BELIEVER IN CHRIST: Romans 15:17-22; 1 Corinthians 4:7; 15:8-10; 1 Timothy 6:17, 18

“I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God” (verse 17). A proper understanding of this verse is very necessary. Paul said, **“I may glory”**. The word interpreted **“glory”** originally means **“boasting”** but could also mean **“praise,**

thanksgiving, and joy". The context of use would explain which of these is applicable to Paul. He said that his "*boasting*" was "**through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God**". This is nothing but telling others the great things which Christ has done in or through him. He spoke of the mighty miracles, signs and wonders that the Holy Spirit did through him in Jerusalem and Illyricum to make the Gentiles who never heard about Christ to obey the gospel. "**For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: But as it is written, to whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand**" (verses 18-21). The proper term for this act is *testifying*.

Question 4: How can we testify of God's goodness in our lives?

Thus, we can say that Paul was expressing "*praise, thanksgiving, and joy*" to God for what He had done through him. Such "*boasting*" that gives recognition to the name and power of the Lord is His delight. "**Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD**" (Jeremiah 9:23, 24). Paul has the mind of God and did not have such a proud nature to glory in his own ability. Even when opportunity presented itself for him to do that, he chose to glory in his weaknesses (2 Corinthians 12:1-6). This is a challenge to all Christians, that at any time we are sharing great things God has done through us with others, we should tie it to the grace of God. If we have to talk about the ability and

resources which we are endowed with but others do not have, we are to tie it to the work of grace.

Question 5: *Which category of people should we focus on during evangelism?*

In the end, he told his audience why he had not come to them; he had been very busy with the preaching of the gospel to people who had never heard about Christ. Although he would like to go to Rome but they already heard the gospel through some other ministers. His aim for seeing them is now to impart some spiritual gifts into them (Chapter 1:8-10, 14-16). We should learn a lesson from this. Our evangelistic outreaches should not be directed towards winning the members of other churches to our own but to lead sinners to Christ.

LESSON 592

PAUL'S PLAN TO VISIT ROME

Memory Verse: *“And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ” (Romans 15:29).*

TEXT: Romans 15:23-33

As Paul started the conclusion of his epistle to the church in Rome which was written while on his missionary journeys, he explains his desire to visit Rome and meet with the church after going to Jerusalem. His trip to Jerusalem was to further strengthen the relationship of the Gentile churches with the headquarters of the Church which was headed by Jewish elders in Jerusalem. Some of the brethren in Rome were experiencing some tough times and needed support; hence, Paul was coming with some contributions which had been made by the churches where he was.

Question 1: Why is unity of the church important?

The body of Christ should not be separated by tribe, color, language or status. **“So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another”** (Romans 12:5). Paul had been a strong advocate of the New Testament Church being founded on the new birth rather than on parental heritage of being Jews. This strong advocacy had resulted into a strong discord initially between the first disciples who were Jews and Paul’s mission team. However, the church elders after due consideration and prayers had decided to accept the Gentile believers. **“And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia”** (Acts 15:23). Thereafter, the church built on this agreement and love was shared. Paul therefore found an opportunity to ensure the Gentile churches gave the Jewish believers who had initially given towards their establishment. As youths, in our different

fellowships and churches, we should work towards contributing our quota for the good of the entire church. We should avoid anything that would create disharmony in our fellowships. We should also not join bad boys and girls who create cliques within the fellowship and segregate themselves from other people. **“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ”** (1 Corinthians 12:12).

PAUL’S DESIRE TO VISIT ROME (Romans 15:23, 24; Acts 20:18–24, 27; Galatians 2:19–21; Psalm 143:10; John 4: 34; 9: 4; Matthew 28:18 –20; Acts 9: 15; 2 Timothy 4:5-8).

“But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you” (Romans 15:23). Paul, the great missionary had visited various places in the land of Asia and beyond, testifying of the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. While preaching the gospel he endured agonies, pains, injuries, persecutions and rejections by some of his close allies. He had sacrificed all to ensure that the great assignment of bearing the light of the gospel was spread as directed by the Lord. Now, an aging old man, he gave an account of his work stating that he had visited the places required. Now, there was nowhere else to go within the lands where he was. He covered the place obeying the great mandate given to him by the Lord saying: **“But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel”** (Acts 9:15).

Today, every genuinely saved youth is called to the great assignment of preaching the gospel of Christ. **“...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature”** (Mark 16:15). God wants us to take this great task with all seriousness and commitment that we can muster and like Paul to be able to state that **“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith”** (2 Timothy 4:7). To preach the gospel, there is need to have passion and compassion on the lost. Passion is a motivator to preach the gospel even though one may

encounter challenges and difficulties while delivering the gospel message to the lost. Passion empowers the believer to go the extra mile to ensure the unsaved receives the gospel of Christ. It would make the believer spend time in prayer for the unsaved, pleading for their souls. In our schools and communities, there are many people waiting for one to share the light of the gospel with them.

Paul was a focused apostle who in spite of his desire to go to Rome waited until he had finished the assigned task of preaching in the lands of Asia and Europe. He then stated his desire to visit them in Rome to see how the church was faring and also join in building them up. He loved fellowshiping with the brethren in various lands and work to build a church that would withstand the storms and false doctrines around. It is instructive that Paul did not delay the writing of the epistle to the Romans until after his visit, but wrote the epistle ahead of his visit. As Christian youths, we should not suspend any form of help or support, but give as much as we can, pending when we are ready for any further care and love. Also, there are various ways of achieving our set goals in the ministry, career or family life. We should not allow the delay in one path to stop us from going through other legitimate pathways.

PAUL'S DUTY TO THE POOR IN JERUSALEM (Romans 15:25–29; 1:16; 1 Thessalonians 1:3).

“But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints” (verse 25). Paul was a committed minister of the kingdom and he was always involved in ministration to the saints. He was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ and was bold to stand for the Lord wherever he was. Although Jerusalem was filled with religious bigots and competent brethren who had been serving in the ministry, Paul was ready to contribute his quota without any fear of dangers which may lie ahead. School officers and leaders appointed by the ministry should know that the work of the ministry is an elevated duty higher than all the secular tasks which we may be appointed to. We are therefore to reverence the Lord who appointed us to the work.

Paul's purpose for going to Jerusalem included attending to the poor and giving them gifts which were contributed

by the Gentile churches. The Lord loves a cheerful giver and there are blessings for those who willingly give to support others who are in need. The churches of Achaia and Macedonia had benefited from the church in Jerusalem in spiritual things which had helped them to be properly positioned as heaven-bound churches. Now, the church in Jerusalem needed their help and assistance and they gave them help.

Question 2: How can Christian youths help and support each other?

It is more blessed to give than to receive. As believers, who have had experience with Christ, we manifest love by giving to those in need. **“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. ...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?”**(1 John 4:7; 3:17). Christian youths can show love and care in various ways including praying, sharing their meals and they can teach those who lack knowledge in certain subjects where they are very good. They can visit the sick people, boys should visit boys while girls should visit girls; lend their textbooks to those who do not have; and give some of their cloths to their neighbors who lack them.

“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister” (Hebrews 6: 10). God rewards those who dedicate themselves as believers to help others. Ministration to the saints in various ways attract commendation of God and the outpouring of blessings upon the ministers. **“But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully”** (2 Corinthians 9:6). There are abundant rewards for those who sow bountifully. These rewards include earthly and eternal rewards. God always lift up the saved youth who sows. However, sinners cannot be rewarded by God because He is not pleased with the offerings of the unrighteous. For the sinner, the Lord says,

“And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood” (Isaiah 1:15). For the sinner to be able to get rewards from God when he gives and ministers to others, the Lord says, **“Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;...Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool”** (Isaiah 1:16,18). After conversion, the sinner who now becomes a saint will be qualified to receive rewards from God for his labor.

“And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ” (verse 29). Paul was a minister who operated with the anointing of the Holy Spirit. As he journeyed to various places, he knew that he needed the Spirit of God to be able to properly minister to lives and be an instrument in the hands of God to convert sinners to saints. He did not rely on his learning to propagate the gospel. He said, **“And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power”** (1 Corinthians 2:4). Youths need the power of the Holy Ghost to have a greater impact in the service of the Lord. When you are endued with power, you will be able to preach more convincingly, pray for the sick and oppressed and have a greater result in ministry. Our schools and fellowships are in need of those who will operate with the unction and anointing of the Holy Spirit.

PRAYER AND DEMAND OF A COMMITTED MINISTER:
(Romans 15:30–33; 1 Kings 8:28–30; 1 Thessalonians 5:25; 2 Thessalonians 3:1)

“Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me” (verse 30). Paul in this passage requested that the brethren should pray for him and he also tabled some prayer requests himself before the Lord. Paul still gave himself to prayers although his life was characterized by great signs and

wonders. He did not rest on his oars or assumed he had reached the peak of his ministry. He coveted prayers, so that he could be of better use in the service of the Lord. He made three specific prayer requests: (1) deliverance from hostile forces; (2) that the gift from the Gentile Christians; would be welcomed by the Jewish Christians and (3) that he might come to Rome with joy.

God answers the prayers of the righteous. He says “**Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not**” (Jeremiah 33:3). To receive answers from God when we pray, we should pray in faith, believing that the Lord will fulfil His promises. As you face life challenges, the sure path of victory is only through prayers. Youths need to arise and give more time to praying both in the secret and open. Prayer changes things and can move the hands of God. When saints pray, the church is revived, sinners are converted, saints are edified and the need of the members of the fellowship and church are met by the Lord.

LESSON 593

SALUTATION OF SAINTS

Memory Verse: *“Salute one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you”* (Romans 16:16).

Text: Romans 16:1-16

As the study of the book of Romans comes to a close, Paul, the apostle highlights the duties of individual Christians in the Church and salutes faithful believers who have made worthy contributions to the cause of Christ and the gospel. Through Phebe, the messenger of the Church from Corinth to Rome, we see and understand the standard practice in the Church concerning individual member’s duties in local church.

Question 1: *Who were the special individuals who offered special services to God as mentioned in our text?*

This chapter consists of both men and women who offered special services to God in their generation. Some of them were Phebe, Priscilla, Aquila, Epaphroditus, Mary, Andronicus, Junia, Urbane, Apelles, Rufus, etc. What special service can we render today?

“Salute one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you” (verse 16). The text also deals with personal greetings and salutations to the saints. It is a mark of good Christian conduct for Christian youths to greet others with respect and honor. The scripture enjoins us thus: **“Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen”** (1 Peter 5:14). However, Christian youths should not misconstrue **“holy kiss”** in our text to mean getting into immoral act. It was the Jewish way of expressing their love and respect to one another. Therefore, learn to greet well in a way acceptable within your society.

PHEBE: A SERVANT OF THE CHURCH (Romans 16:1, 2; Acts 18:24, 27, 28; Philippians 2:25-30; 3 John 5, 6)

“I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea:” (verse 1). Paul here enjoins the Church to care for visiting Phebe. How needful is this exhortation in the Christian Church today? This is because visitors or strangers may come to our Church unnoticed and uncared for. The effect of possible neglect is great. A Christian scholar describes the effect this way:

‘A young man, far from home, exposed to many temptations and godless surroundings, enters a church. No one speaks to him. He drifts away. He knows that in the drinking salon, perhaps he will find a welcome and a friendly shake of the hand. “The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of the light”. Why should not Christians be as anxious to welcome strangers to the house of God as the ungodly are to welcome them to their haunts of giddy pleasure and sin or some stranger enters a Christian Church who is in trouble or in perplexity and to whom a word of sympathy or guidance would be welcome. But from the self-absorbed and stand-off Christians, no encouragement is received. Can we wonder that such persons are alienated from the Church and often alienated from Christ?’

From our text, Paul found it necessary to Phebe give a letter of introduction to the Church in Rome. Such letters of recommendation were widely used in the early Church (Acts 18:24, 27, 28).

Question 2: *Who was Phebe? How did Paul describe her?*

Phebe was a deaconess who lived at Cenchrea in Corinth. She was the one who delivered this epistle to the Roman Church. Paul told the Roman Church to receive Phebe in the Lord and as a saint. **“That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also”** (verse 2). They

were to accept her to the privileges of Christian fellowship and assist her in whatever business she might have need of them.

PRISCILLA AND AQUILA: SUPPORTERS OF THE CHURCH (Romans 16:3-5; Acts 18:1-3, 18, 24-28).

“Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus:” (verse 3). Priscilla and Aquila had proven their loyalty to the Lord in everything they did. The impact of their ministries affected many lives. They trained and encouraged Apollos who became very useful in the ministry.

Question 3: *From our text, how did Paul described Priscilla and Aquila?*

“Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles” (verses 3, 4). The text describes this couple in different ways. (i) As helpers in Christ Jesus. A helper is a person who renders assistance to someone in need. This couple rendered assistance to Paul the apostle when he was in need. Though we do not know the help they rendered, the Lord has a record of their service. **“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister”** (Hebrews 6:10). (ii) They sacrificed their lives for the sake of others. Priscilla and Aquila practically fulfilled 1 John 3:16 which says **“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren”**. (iii) They were praise-worthy! The spiritual qualities of this couple did not only attract praise from the apostle but all the churches of the Gentiles (verse 4). What a challenge to us today!

The love, unity and service of Priscilla and Aquila are worthy of emulation. Before Jesus left the disciples, He prayed for the sanctification of believers (John 17:17-21).

After many years, the prayer of Jesus was answered in their lives. This we see in the demonstration of sincerity and practical life, home and ministry of this couple.

PERSONALITIES WITH SPECIAL PLACE IN CHRIST:

(Romans 16:5-16; 1 Corinthians 16:15, 16; 15:58).

There are many lessons we learn from the way Paul rolls out the names of the members of the Roman church. Though he had never visited the church at Rome, he was in touch with them. The long list of names shows how people there were dear to his heart. The mention of particular names shows the love he had for them. Besides, he seems to have had very enviable faculty or ability for remembering names. This is an essential quality in Christian leadership. The Scripture says: **“I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine”** (John 10:14).

Question 4: *Mention some names remembered by Paul. Describe the Christian qualities in them.*

“Greet Mary, who bestowed much labor on us. Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord. Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved” (Romans 16:6-9).

Some of the names remembered by Paul (1) *Epaenetus* was the first fruits (first set of people to receive Christ) of Achaia; (2) *Mary* bestowed much labor on the children of God; (3) *Andronicus* and *Junia* were kinsmen of Paul and fellow prisoners with him. They were very submissive and obedient. Though they were saved before Paul, they were ready to be under his leadership and teaching) (4) *Amplias* was held in special respect and was the **“beloved in the Lord”**; (5) *Urbane* was a helper in Christ (who must have rendered help to other children of God without discrimination); (6) *Apelles* was approved in Christ; (7) *Tryphena* and *Tryphosa* were Christian women who lived in Rome and were known to Paul; (8) *Persis* was a beloved and labored much in the Lord; (9) *Rufus* was chosen in the Lord and Paul also sent greetings to his mother; and (10) Brethren in general. As Paul was rounding off his long list, he grouped other names as saints. He requested they should greet themselves with holy and warm greetings. The churches of Christ where he was also greeted them too.

LESSON 594

SCRIPTURAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS FALSE TEACHERS

Memory Verse: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them"
(Romans 16:17).

TEXT: Romans 16:17-27

The Scripture is given by God to His beloved children to regulate, guide, and direct their actions, reactions, characters and conducts. The book of Romans contains instructions that are necessary for salvation from sin, holiness of life, consecration and separation from the world. In addition, the book also reveals God's expectation of believers in our society, their responsibilities towards other believers and unbelievers.

As Paul the apostle concludes his message, he made it known that false teachers and false brethren exist and explains how to treat them. Some of the acquaintances of Paul were listed. This teaches Christian youths who their companions should be. Finally, he committed the brethren into the grace of God and the preserving power of the gospel of Christ.

THE COUNSEL AGAINST FALSE TEACHERS (Romans 16:17-20; Jeremiah 28:1-17; 2 Timothy 4:3; Matthew 7:15; 2 Peter 2:1-3, 10-21; 2 John 10, 11).

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Romans 16:17, 18). Paul the apostle observed that false teachers exist in the Roman Church.

Therefore, he counselled them on the scriptural attitude they should exhibit towards such. The counsel here on the attitude towards false teachers is to mark and avoid them.

Question 1: *How can saved youths identify false teachers in the church in these last days?*

False teachers are deceitful. They are the folks that Christ called false prophets. They come **“in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves”** (Matthew 7:15). In real world, sheep are known to be quiet and easy going, so are the false teachers. They come with fair speeches and sweet words. They look quiet and manifest hypocritical love, but **“inwardly they are ravening wolves”**. This reflects how deceitful and dangerous they are. Christ said that by their fruits you will know them. They are seen as doing things that contradict the word of God. They usually add or subtract from the written word of God in their acts and practices. They always counter the truth with falsehood, thereby causing divisions and offences. Youths are warned not to be identified with them.

Question 2: *Who is a false teacher working for and why?*

“For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (verse 18). It is evident that they are working for their master, the devil and their bellies. Their aim is the same with that of the devil. **“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour”** (1Peter 5:8). The thief (devil) comes to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10). The false teachers pervert the heart of believing youths to draw them back into sin. Their aim is to make them entangled again and perish in hell fire. The obedience of saved youths to God is visible to all, they make effort to ensure they no longer continue obeying God. Paul’s prayer for the believer is: **“And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen”** (verse 20).

THE COMPANION OF A DUTIFUL GOSPEL TEACHER:
(Romans 16:21-23; 2 Kings 12:10-16; Proverbs 27:17; 13:20; 3 John 14; Titus 3:15; Colossians 4:14).

Paul's life agrees to the scriptural teachings and the companions he kept attested to this. As a dutiful minister of the word, his companions were fellow-laborers in the Lord. **“Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you. I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord. Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother”** (verses 21-23). As a wise master-builder, he did not keep the company of the fools.

Question 3: *What is the implication of keeping company with unbelievers?*

“He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed” (Proverbs 13:20). One of the secrets of Paul's success in life and ministry was the company of people he kept. From the time he gave his life to Christ, he separated himself from the sect of the Pharisees. Many youths professing to be born again today find it difficult to separate from their worldly friends. This can lead to backsliding. For Christian youths to make it to the end, they must walk with youths of like precious faith. **“Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend”** (Proverbs 27:17).

Question 4: *Are there youths in the Bible who kept good companions and excelled?*

A youth like Timothy was one of the companions of Paul the apostle who later became a useful instrument in God's hand. Daniel and his three friends were other examples of good companionship. Theirs was a company of resolute youths whose minds were made up to glorify God. They excelled in their careers. The grace of God is available for all youths to do likewise (verse 24). Contrary to this was Rehoboam the son of King Solomon who kept the company with unwise companions. They counselled him wrongly, and he was denied being king over the whole of Israel. **“And spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, my father made your yoke heavy,**

and I will add to your yoke: my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the LORD, that he might perform his saying, which the LORD spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat. So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? Neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents” (1 Kings 12:14- 16). In the same way, many youths drop out of school and have become touts robbers, drug addicts, etc. due to wrong companions. You better check those you call your friends and if you discover you are keeping bad friends, it is right time you disassociate from them for your own good.

THE CONSERVING POWER OF THE GOSPEL (Romans 16:24-27; Isaiah 53:10; 54:14; Jeremiah 24:6; John 10:28; I Peter 1:12; Jude 24).

“Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith” (verses 25, 26). Having revealed who the companions of the saved ones should be, Paul committed the Roman believers to the preserving power of Christ through His word. Paul revealed by inspiration that he **“kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house”** (Acts 20:20). Paul was not only a master-builder, but a wise and loving one. This is worth emulating by the saved youths and Christian workers. He realized that it was possible for these believers whose lives he has affected to become carnal as to boast and trust in man as done by the Corinthian believers. Therefore, he pointed them to Christ’s gospel for their stability.

Question 5: *By what means can born again boys and girls be established in the faith?*

Christ is the One who saves sinners from iniquities. He is also the Sanctifier, the Baptiser and the Preserver of the believers. **“Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand”** (Isaiah 53:10). Christ establishes the true Christians through the gospel. The gospel contains the mysteries of the kingdom. It reveals all that a believer need to know to remain in the faith. It also reveals how to handle temptations, trials, and persecutions. The past, present and future events of the world are all in the Scripture. If the Bible is strictly adhered to, our preservation in the faith is sure.

Question 6: *What are Christian youths to do to become stable in Christ?*

From the foregoing, any youth that desires stability in the faith through the gospel of Christ should read, study and live by the Bible daily. They should also meditate on God’s word and be obedient to it. In addition, they have to keep the company of God’s children and should not forsake the fellowship of the brethren. They should also seek counselling from mature leaders when necessary. Above all, they should pray always.

LESSON 595

COMMENDATION AND EXHORTATION TO UNITY IN THE CHURCH

Memory Verse: “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment”
(1 Corinthians 1:10).

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 1:1-17

Our lesson today introduces us to the study of the epistle of Paul the apostle to the Corinthians. History informs us that the ancient city of Corinth was known for all kinds of lifestyle. As a matter of fact, the Romans made the Corinthians the butt of dirty jokes, and playwrights consistently portrayed them as drunken brawlers. The city of Corinth was notorious for prostitution, gambling and drug dealings. Tourists stroll by to stare at the sights of this decadent practices. From the Greek proverb, “to corinthianize” means to live shamelessly and immorally. This depicts the moral and spiritual state of the city of Corinth. As for their religious ideal, the fun-loving Corinthians worshiped Venus, the goddess of love.

A temple built in her honor employed more than one thousand (1,000) prostitutes. Due to all these negative influences, one would have thought that Corinth would be the least to likely convert to the Christian faith. But God, who is not willing that any should perish sent the apostle Paul to Corinth a time. **“After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; ... And crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized. Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace. For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people**

in this city” (Acts 18:1, 8-10). This was how the church at Corinth was born. Paul worked in Corinth for eighteen (18) months to establish the Corinthian church (Acts 18:11).

Question 1: *What lesson can we learn from the conversion of many Corinthians in spite of the moral decadence of the city?*

Often, we are tempted to write-off “hard-hearted” youths who are involved in drunkenness, gambling, smoking, immorality, prostitution, addiction or cultism. We must not be faithless because the Lord has “**much people**” among those youths. The transforming power of the gospel can save them and anyone today (Romans 1:15, 16).

SAINTLINESS: THE CALLING OF TRUE CHRISTIANS: (1 Corinthians 1:1, 2; Acts 9:1-6,15; 26:13-19; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Roman 15:18,19; 1 Peter 1:14-16; Romans 1:7).

Paul was very sure of his calling and apostleship. Several times in the scriptures he made reference to his conversion experience and how the Lord called him to be an apostle to the Gentiles. The signs of his apostleship confirmed the fact that he was truly called by the Lord to be an apostle. He was different from so many self-named apostles today who are without any apostolic signs and manifestations that normally confirm apostolic calling.

Question 2: *Mention some of the signs of a true apostle.*

An apostle is a divinely sent one. One who is specially sent and empowered by the Lord to preach the gospel and is also backed up with apostolic signs and wonders. The signs of a true apostle include mass conversion of souls and manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit. These signs were prominent in the ministry of Paul among the Gentile nations. Writing to the Corinthians he said: “**Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs and wonders, and mighty deeds**”. And to the Romans he declared: “**For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the gentiles obedient, by word and deed, Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; So that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the**

gospel of Christ” (2 Corinthians 12:12; Roman 15:18, 19).

Verse two of our text talks about the recipients of the epistle: **“Unto the church of God which is at Corinth”**. Paul the apostle was the one the Lord used to write the epistle to the Corinthian church. The epistle is a letter, an inspired book of the Bible. It was written primarily to address certain misconducts as well as answer some moral questions which were causing confusions in that church. Christian youths in particular will find this book to be very instructive and edifying because **“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works”** (2 Timothy 3:16).

Question 3: *What do you understand by the term, ‘church’ as used in our text?*

The word “church” does not refer to the building where the people gather to worship. Rather, it is the assembly of born-again people. In the church at Corinth Paul wrote the epistle were people who had received the gospel and accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior. The epistle was meant to edify and build up the church - the body of Christ. It still serves the same purpose in our present church today. As we read and study this epistle, along with other books of the Bible, we should allow it to fulfil its ministry and goal in our lives.

Paul addressed the church at Corinth as **“them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours”**. The Church of Christ is not only called out of the world but is **“sanctified in Christ Jesus”**. In the context of this verse, it means that the Church is set apart for or separated to Christ. Since Christ, the Head of the Church, is holy, **“sanctified in Christ”** implies that the Church is called to be holy. No wonder 1 Peter 1:14-16 says, **“As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because**

it is written, be ye holy; for I am holy". This message of being called to be saints or to be holy is not for the church at Corinth alone, but to **"all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours"**. The message is for us today as long as we have come to believe in the same Christ whom they also believed.

There are many youths who belong to several assemblies where they deny or relegate the message of saintly living and holiness of life to the background and yet claim to call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. God does not approve of such people and their assemblies. All true believers are called to be saints. Paul reaffirmed this truth in Roman 1:7. Our text also disproves the view of some religious bodies who claim that nobody can be a saint as long as we exist on earth. There are those who even claim that one can become a saint only after death. These are satanic views aimed at making people not to appropriate the benefit of the redemptive work of Christ at Calvary. **"For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit"** (1 Thessalonians 4:7, 8).

SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT THROUGH GRACE: (1 Corinthians 1:13 -9; Titus 2: 11, 12; Romans 5: 1; Ephesians 1:1-3).

Paul, in verse 3 of our text, commended the brethren for the outcome of the work of grace in their lives. We are saved by grace, sustained and secured in Christ by grace (Ephesians 2:8; 2 Peter 1:2-4). When one receives and appropriates the grace of God into his life, he becomes born-again. Being justified by faith in Christ, he has peace with God as the enmity with God is resolved and the fear of judgment and eternal damnation is taken away. The peace of God that surpasses understanding floods the soul of the one in whose heart the grace of God is allowed to work. What a glorious experience to have! Paul often made reference to the grace and peace of God each time he wrote his epistles. To the Ephesian believers he said: **"Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and**

from the Lord Jesus Christ". Christian youths should take deliberate steps to live and walk in the consciousness of the grace of God and also "**let the peace of God rule in your heart**" (Colossians 3:15).

The apostle went on to talk about the definite spiritual enrichment of the Corinthian church through the grace of God. He said "**That in everything ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge**". They were so enriched with the gifts of God so that he said of them, "**...ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ**". Grace, if allowed to fully work in our lives, will bring abundance and enrichment of spiritual gifts.

Question 4: *Mention some of the spiritual gifts we can receive through the grace of God.*

The spiritual gifts we can receive through the grace of God include (i) the gift of eternal life (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8); (ii) the gift of sanctification and holiness (Ezekiel 36:26; Luke 1:74,75; Ephesians 1 :3,4); (iii) the baptism with the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:37; 1 Thessalonians 4:8); (iv) the gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:1,4-10; Roman 12: 6-8) etc. There are many other spiritual blessings which we can receive from the Lord according to the grace of God that works in us. "**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus**" (Ephesians 1:3). Christian youths can approach the throne of grace by faith to appropriate the blessings of God into their lives. By so doing, we can live victoriously and reign in life because "**they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ**" (Romans 5:7). How grateful and thankful we must be to our God for his matchless grace and unimaginable benevolence towards us! "**Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift**" (2 Corinthians 9:15).

SOLEMN EXHORTATION TO UNITY IN THE CHURCH:
(1 Corinthians 1:10-17; Luke 11:17; 1Corinthians 3:1-5).

News had reached Paul the apostle that there was disunity and divisions among the brethren in the church at Corinth.

This was one of the reasons why the Lord used Paul to write the epistle to them. In verse 10 of our text, he exhorted the brethren to be united. **“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment”**. In exhorting them to be united, he appealed to them in the name of the Lord. Bringing the Lord into the matter makes the exhortation a solemn and serious issue. The Scripture enjoins us to do all things in the name our Lord (Colossians 3:17).

Question 5: *What are the consequences of disunity among believers?*

Disunity and discord among brethren are some of the tools of the devil against the Church of God. Christ said that a kingdom that is divided against itself cannot stand (Luke 11:17). If division is allowed to take root among brethren in the church, the consequences are disastrous.

1. The world will not be saved. Christ, knowing this, earnestly prayed for the unity of the Church so that the world would believe in Him (John 17:20, 21).
2. There would be loss of Christian experiences and lack of spirituality where there is disunity (1 Corinthians 3:1-3).
3. Division also opens the door to envy, strife and suspicions in the fellowship of believers.
4. There would be unscriptural and unedifying factions and groups in the assembly of disunited brethren (verse 12, 13).
5. Backsliding of new converts will be common in a disunited assembly.
6. There would also be the penetration of demonic works as a disunited church will be powerless.
7. Finally, the infiltration of false doctrines is inevitable in a disunited assembly. Note that a disunited church may eventually disintegrate. ‘United in the truth, we stand, divided we fall’.

Question 6: *What are the antidotes to disunity or division among brethren in the church?*

Spiritual experiences and sincere Christian living are paramount to keep the body of Christ united. To be united in Christ and in the truth of the Word of God, there must be:

1. salvation experience (2 Corinthians 5: 17);
2. sanctification experience (John 17:17, 21; Acts2:1, 2);
3. sound doctrine (Titus 2:1);
4. supplication for sustained unity (Acts 4:24, 31-33) ;
5. separation from false brethren and
6. Sincerity of motives and purpose (Galatians 2:4, 5; Titus 3:10).

Worthy of note is the reaction of the brethren of the house of Chloe. They did not feel unconcerned about the divisions that were going on in the church. Besides, they did not just make a gossip of the whole matter. Since they were not in the position of resolving the matter, they reported to the appropriate authority. Also, making their identities known to Paul shows how sincere and spiritual they were. This is a good example for Christian youths to follow. Rather than gossiping about wrong things we see among believers in the church, we should report to the appropriate leadership for correction, reconciliation and the overall edification of the body of Christ. By so doing, Satan will not be given a chance to operate among us and the church united will stand on Christ the Solid Rock. **“Let all things be done unto edifying”** and let us watch **“That there be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another”** (1 Corinthians 14: 26; 12: 25).

LESSON 596

JUSTIFICATION

Memory Verse: *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Romans 5:1).

TEXT: Acts 13:38, 39; Psalm 32:1, 2; Romans 3:20-26

One of the foundational doctrines of the New Testament Church is the doctrine of Justification. Justification is the act of God’s grace through which one receives forgiveness and remission of sins and is counted righteous before God, through faith in the atoning blood of Jesus.

Question 1: *What is justification?*

Having been cleared of every guilt of sin, the regenerated stands before God as though he had never sinned, not on the basis of any personal merit but in the light of what Christ had accomplished for mankind by His substitutionary death on the cross at Calvary. **“Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses”** (Acts 13:38).

PURPOSE OF JUSTIFICATION (Isaiah 1:18; 59: 8; Romans 3:24, 25; 5:9; 1 John 2:2; Acts 4:12).

God has provided a place of eternal rest and joy in heaven for all who qualify to enter therein. Heaven is a place where the sorrows and agonies of earth will be forever forgotten. It is the abode of God and the place where the redeemed will dwell eternally. To dwell in heaven, God has given conditions to everyone who desires it. The condition is freedom from all sins or purity of heart. The Psalmist in asked an all- important question in this regard. **“Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who shall stand in his holy place?”** God responded by saying, **“He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully”** (Psalms

24:4). Man therefore needs to be completely cleansed and holy to dwell with God. Any form of sin would debar anyone from entering into heaven. **“But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear”** (Isaiah 59:2).

Question 2: *How was our justification made possible?*

To dwell in heaven with God, a youth needs to be justified. However, every sinner is helpless and hopeless without the provision of salvation in Christ Jesus. **“As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: ...For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”** (Romans 3:10, 23). Justification is God’s way of providing the way of escape from eternal death and agony for man whose life of sin has attracted God’s wrath and judgment. The need for justification becomes high as man is incapable of personally providing a solution to his problem of sin or change his eternal destiny of damnation (Isaiah 59:8).

To meet the standard of divine justice, due price needed to be paid. Man lacked both the capacity and purity to afford this. It required the sacrifice of the spotless Lamb of God to pay the necessary ransom with His blood for the forgiveness of man’s sins. Blood is life. His shed blood is His life that He gave to redeem us. The nature of sin is not such that man could handle on his own or by the merit of his works (Ephesians 2:8, 9). Just as circumcision cannot justify the Jews nor water baptism the Gentile, so can church membership or confirmation not justify anyone to attain the standard of God’s righteousness and holiness? Only faith in the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross can grant a penitent soul justification.

Though physically present in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve died spiritually and became alienated from God and from the commonwealth of His kingdom, after eating the forbidden fruit. Christ therefore became the sin Bearer, based on the fact of God’s provision and promise of the Scripture (Romans 3:24, 25). And He is **“the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world”** (1 John 2:2; Acts 4: 12). By Christ’s finished work of grace, solution was provided to the problem of

sin to ensure man's reconciliation with God (Isaiah 44:22; Romans 5:9).

PEOPLE TO BE JUSTIFIED (Acts 17:30, 31; Romans 5:1; Hebrews 4:2).

“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works” (Revelation 20:12). Justification brings the sinning youth into relationship with God and makes the sinner free from all sins and the consequences of sin. Justification is for everyone because we will stand before God in judgment at the end of time. Judgment will involve the dead and living; whether small or great; young or old; male or female. However, the dead are unable to be justified as they cannot repent or change.

Question 3: *Who can be justified?*

Justification is meant for every living person who is not yet saved and has reached the age of accountability. Because justification requires a personal commitment and desire to be saved, infants cannot be said to have experienced justification since they do not make such commitments. Although Christ's atonement on the cross guarantees universal provision of salvation for all mankind, this could only be appropriated on personal basis through faith in Him. The sinning youth who seeks salvation must take the necessary steps of exercising faith in the blood of Jesus. **“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”**. No one can be justified without faith in Christ. **“For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it”** (Hebrews 4:2).

POWER OF THE JUSTIFIER (Psalm 32:1, 2; Isaiah 1:18, 19; Micah 7:19; Acts 13:38).

Question 4: *Who is our Justifier?*

God alone can transform a sinful soul to a saint who is bound for heaven. This power is in Jesus Christ. **“As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give**

eternal life to as many as thou hast given him” (John 17:2). Hence, anyone who is ready to receive justification needs to come to Jesus Christ and be washed in the blood of the Lamb. **“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name”** (John 1:12).

Question 5: What are the steps required before one can be fully justified?

The sinner first needs to acknowledge his sins (Psalm 51:1–6); believe in Christ’s atoning blood as the only way to salvation (Hebrews 12: 24); confess all known sins and repent totally from them (Psalm 32: 5); believe in Christ for salvation (Romans 10: 9). Having been saved through faith in our Lord Jesus, the redeemed should have a clean life as evidence, to show for his justification (2 Corinthians 5:17). Before he was justified, the sinner was plagued by the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19–21). But now, that he is a new creature, the fruit of the Spirit becomes manifest (Galatians 5:22, 23). Therefore, in lifestyle, speech, conduct and disposition, the redeemed is like Christ, having been quickened by the Spirit of God.

“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Galatians 2:16). Justification is by faith before God but by works before men. Properly understood, none is really mutually exclusive. We are saved by faith, but we need to ensure we do good works as believers in line with the scripture. The question now is, are you justified by faith in Jesus?

LESSON 597

FREEDOM FROM WITCHCRAFT

Memory Verse: “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”
(John 8:32).

TEXT: Acts 16:16-19; 1 Samuel 28:7-19; Deuteronomy 18:9-14

Among the abominations the Lord warned His people against is witchcraft or involvement in any form of familiar spirit’s activities. In the Old Testament, the Lord prescribed a stern penalty on anyone involved in witchcraft activities. It was for this reason that He dispossessed the heathen nations of the land of Canaan and replaced them with the children of Israel. **“When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shall not learn to do after the abominations of those nations”** (Deuteronomy 18:9). Although some people, due to civilization, education and modernism, try to deny the existence of witchcraft, the Holy Spirit through the Scripture proves and affirms the reality of familiar spirits and witchcraft activities. It is part of Satan’s devices to hide this wicked act in order to keep people in perpetual bondage and far from the experience of salvation. Christian youths must be scripturally informed concerning these satanic activities so that they can wage effective spiritual war against Satan and his cohorts. This is why this study is very important. **“Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: For we are not ignorant of his devices”** (2 Corinthians 2:11).

WARNING AGAINST WITCHCRAFT (Deuteronomy 18:9-15; Leviticus 20:27; Exodus 22:18; 1 Samuel 28:7-19 Galatians 5:19-21; Revelation 21:8).

“There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch” (Deuteronomy 18:10). From our text, the Lord clearly warned the children of Israel against

witchcraft and any other form of familiar spirits' activities and devices. The children of Israel were called out of Egypt and all the heathen nations. God wanted them to be separated from all the heathen practices and cleave to Him alone. In the same vein, believers are called out of the world with all its practices to be separated to Christ alone (1 Thessalonians 1:9).

Question 1: *What is witchcraft?*

Witchcraft has to do with the use of magic, manipulations, craftiness and seduction with the help of demonic spirits to practice magic and perpetrate wicked activities. The ultimate aim of witchcraft is to harm and possibly destroy people. It is also called sorcery. Witches and wizards are the human agents of the devil. Witches and wizards are possessed with and enabled by familiar spirits to carry out magical acts as well as oppression and affliction on their victims (1 Samuel 28:7, 9). God forbids and warns us against this occultic practice.

Question 2: *What was God's verdict on witchcraft in the Old Covenant?*

Witches and wizards as well as youths who associate or meddle in any form with them, are all under the captivity of the devil. All such people will face the judgment of God. In the Old Covenant, the punishment God commanded to be meted on any one who got involved in witchcraft activities of familiar spirits was capital punishment. Witches were not allowed to live.

Questions 3: *Are there examples of people in the Old Testament who were punished for involvement or dealing with witchcraft?*

One of the main reasons the heathen nations were exterminated by God through the instrumentality of the children of Israel was due to their deep trust and involvement in witchcraft and dealings with the activities of familiar spirits. **“For these nations which thou shalt possess hearkened unto observers of times and unto diviners”** (Deuteronomy 18:14). Common practices among them were necromancy, soothsaying, palm reading, 1sorcery, star gazing, divination, observing of times, 2enchanting,

charming and so on. As the children of Israel were at the threshold of the Promised Land, God warned and said: **“Thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations”**. He reminded them that all such practices are abominable and it was due to these abominations that He drove those nations out of the land. **“For all that do those things are an abomination unto the LORD and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee”**. Saul, the first king of Israel, unfortunately consulted with a witch— a woman who had a familiar spirit. He was consequently judged by God. **“So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it”** (1 Chronicles 10:13). Jezebel, the wife of King Ahab also died a miserable death as a result of witchcraft (1 Kings 21:23, 25; 2 Kings 9:22, 30-37).

THE ACTIVITIES OF WITCHCRAFT (2 Kings 9:22, 30; Acts 13:16-8; 8:9-11; 16:16).

Witchcraft is prevalent in these last days. The situation is very common among young people. It is common now to see a child that is possessed with the spirit of witchcraft initiating several others. In a general sense, there are some manifestations common among people who are involved with witchcraft. However, we need to say clearly that an occasional manifestation of any of these does not automatically imply involvement in witchcraft. Moreover, a real believer cannot be initiated or possessed with evil spirits because **“Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel”** (Numbers 23:23). Christian youth must therefore occupy their position (Ephesians 2:6), appropriate their privileges (Colossians 1:13) and demonstrate their power of attorney (Luke 10:19) which they have in Christ. The believer’s life is hid with Christ in God.

Question 4: *Mention some ways by which some youths get involved in witchcraft activities.*

There are youths who seek the help of witch doctors or herbalists in order to know about their future, fate,

pass examinations, win the love of an opposite gender, overcome enemies or solve any perceived problem of life. Such foolish ventures bring one into involvement with familiar spirits. In many cases, spiritual covenants are established with demons unknowingly.

When one notices a strange diabolical power of fulfilment backing up his words and this begins to reflect as a pattern in his life, it might be helpful to probe the presence of the spirit of witchcraft in his life. Besides, there are some whose evil imagination are unusually but surely backed up with the power of fulfilment. The issue now is not the disposition of the person; it does not matter whether he resents the idea or not. But when the pattern is observed it would do a lot of good if he submits himself for examination and assistance where necessary. Even those who can manipulate and remotely control the decisions and actions of other people, irrespective of how far away they are, must be operating with the power of witchcraft (Acts 13:7-10). This is quite different from the effect of intercessory prayer of God's people on behalf of others who are in distant location. When one notices he generally takes flight to designated places where he meets with other people in his dreams, it might be connected with witchcraft. An unusual delight in wickedness and evil occurrences gives signals of connection with witchcraft. When one detests prayers, seeks to almost always evade anointed power-backed corporate prayer of authority, it shows a hardness of heart, and stubbornness that is beyond the normal, involvement in witchcraft may not be altogether ruled out. So also is the ability to predict secret or future events without a personal relationship with God. This is not mere guessing or occasional accurate prediction but a consistent and regular pastime such as the case of the Philippian damsel in Acts 16:16.

Those in witchcraft cannot be idle else they will earn the wrath of their master the devil. They must be busy for him. The devil is a hard taskmaster and he saddles them with uncanny, wicked assignments. These assignments form the activities of their lives and they keep faithful to them until the Stronger One than the devil comes to set them free.

The first and primary activity of witches and wizards is to initiate others into witchcraft and prevent people from exercising true faith in Christ (Acts 13:7-10). They also cause mysterious bloodletting accidents through the blood sucking spirits indwelling them. Some of them place curse on people and work at destroying lives. Destruction and disintegration of families hitherto happy and joyful is their work.

Some witches are assigned to seduce the opposite gender as many as they could get. Others oppress their neighbors at night, tie up the wombs of married woman, wreck the businesses of others, cause delay in marriages, hinder progress and at times cause mysterious disappearance of money.

Still, it is essential to emphasize that an abiding Christian should not and cannot be the subject of these attacks and operation of the devil. Even if witches and wizards target the believer, their weapons do not prosper (Isaiah 54:17; Jeremiah 1:19). The essence of witchcraft is to have the devil accomplish, through a human agent, what he would have done directly. But the Bible says “... **the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly...**” (Romans 16:20). If Satan, the master of witches, wizards, familiar spirits, magicians, necromancers, is bruised under our feet, what would his human agents do? Nothing! This is the joy and confidence of believers.

THE WAY OUT OF WITCHCRAFT (1 John 3:8; Hebrews 2:14; Mathew 8:16, 17; John 8:32, 36; Acts 19:18, 19; Ephesians 5:11, 12; 2Corinthians 6:15-18).

To avert the certain judgment of God that is pronounced on all those who are involved in witchcraft, there must be sincere repentance with practical renunciation. Christ was manifested to destroy all the works of the devil including witchcrafts. He died and resurrected to set the captives free. During His earthly ministry, He delivered many possessed and oppressed people that were brought to Him. He is still the same yesterday, today and forever. When He sets you free, you will be free indeed.

Question 5: What are the steps to be free from witchcraft?

The steps of freedom from witchcraft are as follows:

- (i)** repentance and honest confession of all evil deeds;
- (ii)** renunciation of all satanic activities and covenants;
- (iii)** rejection of associates of witchcraft;
- (iv)** destruction of items and materials that have connection with witchcraft;
- (v)** scriptural deliverance prayer by anointed ministers of Christ; and
- (vi)** Continual fellowship with Christ and His church.

There is divine protection for believing youths in Christ. So long as they live holy by the grace of God, Satan cannot harm nor touch them. They should therefore, not entertain any fear of being hurt by witchcraft. Youths who are still outside Christ and are held under the afflictions, bondage and oppression of witchcraft against their wish can be freed if they truly repent of their sins and exercise faith in Christ. **“If the son therefore shall make you free ye shall be free indeed”** (John 8:36).

LESSON 598

BIBLICAL PORTRAIT OF THE HOME CARING FELLOWSHIP

Memory Verse: “*And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens*” (Exodus 18:25).

TEXT: Exodus 18:13-24

Our text deals with dividing a large congregation into small groups for easy administration. Moses was not able to cope with the responsibility of leading, teaching and counselling the children of Israel alone. Hence, he was counselled by Jethro to decentralize the work. In the same vein, the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ was attended by multitudes of people. In some cases, the meetings lasted for more than one day. The ministries of the apostles also had such explosions. On the day of Pentecost, for instance, about three thousand souls were saved and added to the church. Much more got converted after this. Contemporary church accounts also record such great increase in number. This makes it very difficult to know and to minister those who come to the church. The leaders are overburdened and the needs of some people are just neglected. These cause dissatisfaction, murmuring and disaffection.

Question 1: *Of what importance is the Youth Home Success Fellowship in a large church?*

This calls for a subdivision of the church into smaller groups where each member is particularly known and their needs are also catered for both physically and spiritually. Ideally, these groups meet in designated houses of various members of the larger church at regular period of the week. The place should be free from distractions and filth.

This gathering or meeting is called House Caring Fellowship. For the youths it is called the Students' Home

Success Fellowship. This is also divided into male and female classes. In any case, the gathering is for fellowship, caring and sharing of ideas that would help each member progress and become edified.

SMALL GROUP: A BIBLICAL STRATEGY THAT ENDURES (Exodus 12:3, 4; 18:25; Joshua 7:14; 1 Samuel 10:19-21; Acts 2:46, 47; 9:36-42; 16:40; 18:7, 8; 20:20; 1 Corinthians 16:19).

“Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb” (Exodus 12:3, 4).

Question 2: Give some biblical foundations to justify the organization of a large church into smaller groups.

Addressing a large congregation to perform a task may not be very easy as when they are broken into smaller groups. To make the celebration of the Passover less congested, God instructed that the people should be in their houses and provide a lamb for each family. This proved very successful especially when the children of Israel did not have a common place of worship, while they were still in Egypt. The practice continued till the Lord came because He also had the Passover with His disciples in a house (Matthew 26:18). Thus, it was to ensure that every member in a family was carried along.

Jethro counselled Moses to appoint leaders over smaller groups among the people who were able to judge smaller matters and make it easier for him to have time to always represent the people before God. This method remained among the Israelites even till the time when the Lord Jesus came. They had rulers and leaders at different levels.

Question 3: How does a small group grow to become a large church?

Selection of an individual from a larger group becomes much easier after the people had been classified into tribes,

families and households. This method was used in the selection of Saul as a king and in the detection of Achan. Jesus Christ also divided His followers into groups. There was a group of twelve. Even from that group was a group of three. When He had to minister to larger congregation, He made them sit in smaller groups. The early church also used this method. They were divided into smaller groups in houses. Every major thing done within the larger group - prayer, teaching, miracles, prophesying etc. - were also done in the smaller groups. This makes the smaller groups to have the potentials to also become a bigger church that can further be divided. Hence, using this method in the church administration today is not out of place. The method has helped through the ages. The people were known more closely and also catered for.

PURPOSE OF SMALL GROUPS (Acts 2:42-46; 6:1-3).

Breaking into small groups in the early church brought every member nearer to each other in their respective groups. Needs were easily identified. When the church grew so large and there was no adequate growth in the leadership to cater for the surplus smaller groups, some were neglected in their daily ministrations and there was murmuring and complaints. **“And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, it is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business”** (Acts 6:1-3). Then they appointed more leaders to cater for these groups and the people were all pleased.

Question 4: *Outline the purposes of the Home Success Fellowship.*

Breaking the church into smaller groups is to: (1) ensure the genuine conversion of each member; (2) ensure that each member is taught the doctrines of the Bible; (3) give financial assistance to the genuine needs of the members;

(4) to develop interactions that would yield sharing of helpful ideas; (5) give emotional and psychological supports to members when they have problems; (6) reach out to immediate community for evangelistic purposes; and (7) monitor the life of every individual. It will make the bigger church to grow stronger in strength and number.

PRINCIPLES IN A SMALL GROUP (Acts 6:1-7; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 4:12-16; Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:11, 12; 1 Peter 4:10; 2 Timothy 2:23-26).

Question 5: *Who can be a Home Success Fellowship Leader?*

How we appoint a leader over the smaller group matters. The person must be born again and matured in the faith. He or she must be an example of what a Christian life should be. He or she must have been groomed in the doctrines of the Bible. He must personally attend the preview and prayerfully study the outlines before teaching.

Question 6: *Mention some principles that should govern the administration of the Home Success Fellowship.*

The leader should create a sense of belonging in every member so that they feel so glued to one another, each seeking the welfare and well-being of others. There is need to passionately listen to what hurts individual believers and make a conscious effort to see from their point of view. There must be clearly communicated goals for the fellowship members and each of them is to be allowed to participate in the process of achieving the goals. No one should be counted “irrelevant” and none should be seen as “indispensable”. Every fellowship activity should benefit. The study time should be a period of discussion where every member is encouraged to contribute their ideas to the subject of discourse. Questions that cannot be resolved within the group should be taken to the higher authority in the church. No form of strife should be allowed or encouraged. If there is any dispute between one member and another, the leader should not take side with any but be neutral enough to help the aggrieved members reconcile.

Furthermore, we must carry the leader of the “bigger” church along in major activities either by direct and/or written report as the case may be. Problems that could not be handled at this level should be referred to a more matured designated church sectional leader.

LESSON 599

ISRAEL RENEWS COVENANT WITH GOD

Memory Verse: “*So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem*” (Joshua 24:25).

TEXT: Joshua 24:1-28

“**A**nd Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers” (verse 1). The Israelites came to present themselves before the Lord as requested by Joshua. He told them how God called Abraham their father and reminded them how God helped and delivered Israel in the past. They all attested to God’s faithfulness and goodness. Then, he challenged them to serve the Lord.

However, he made it clear that serving God was a matter of choice and not compulsion. They all with one voice said, “**We will serve the LORD**”. Joshua was not too sure they were fully ready to serve God though he took them by their word. Then he led them into a covenant with God and he made a record of all the commandments of the Lord.

Question 1: *What can leaders learn from the concern of Joshua for the spiritual state of the children of Israel?*

A good leader should know the state of his flock and, at the time when the need arises, should be able to lead them to a level of better and deeper commitment to the Lord. Joshua made the people to come to that level where they surrendered all and said, “**We will serve the LORD**”.

RECOLLECTION OF THE PAST (Joshua 24: 1 -13; Deuteronomy 32:1-14; Judges 6:11-14; 1 Samuel 17:30-37, 45-51; Revelation 2:1-5; Acts 20:17-38)

Reminiscence is the recollection of past experiences or events in speech or writing, or the act of recalling the past. Here we see Joshua recalling God’s past dealings with

Israel as a nation right from the time of Abraham up till this time he was addressing them. It was a gathering that included **“all the tribes of Israel”** and their chief men. He made it clear to them that their great grandfather, Abraham, had been an idol worshipper on the other side of the flood. Then, he was called and led through the wilderness of Canaan. God gave him a son called Isaac and he had Jacob and Esau. **“And I gave unto Isaac Jacob and Esau: and I gave unto Esau mount Seir, to possess it; but Jacob and his children went down into Egypt”** (verse 4). There is an important lesson to learn from this.

Question 2: What can we learn from the captivity of Jacob and the settlement of Esau?

God’s covenant with Abraham was transferred to Isaac and then to Jacob yet **“Jacob and his children went down into Egypt”**. Could this, at the beginning, not look like God was not caring for Israel? How could the one who sold his birthright be settled before the real child of promise? But, in the end, God’s promise for Israel was fulfilled. He sent them a deliverer, Moses, who led them out of bondage. He delivered them from the pursuing enemies. All the enemy nations that opposed them in the way were delivered into their hands. Israel got much more than Esau got at Seir. **“And I have given you a land for which ye did not labor, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and olive yards which ye planted not do ye eat”** (verse 13). God’s children who may be experiencing difficulties now should note that with much patience and perseverance, God’s best for them will come (James 5:7,8,10,11).

Question 3: What are the advantages of recalling past experience?

What Joshua did here is what we call reminiscence. We see God doing the same thing through Moses to Israel before his death. He told them of how good God had been to them viz-a-viz how unfaithful they had been. Measuring their commitment side by side with God, they were found wanting. To reminisce is actually very good and productive for Christian youths and their leaders. The following are the advantages of reminiscence. One, it reminds us of the

good past that we have lost (Deuteronomy 5:22-29). Two, it also tells us of the good and productive things we could keep up (Revelation 3:1-4). Three, it informs us of the bad and the unproductive past we should not replicate. Four, it guides us into how to handle the future. Five, it equips us with the courage to face the challenge of the future. David had killed a lion and a bear while watching over the flock of his father. Now, when Goliath bragged, he reminisce (i.e. recalled) his victory over those wild animals and his courage grew. Six, it helps us to see what to correct in the present. While Christ reminisce about the life of the church at Ephesus, He pointed out that they were not what they used to be.

Question 4: *How can Christian youths reminisce today?*

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” (2 Corinthians 13:5). We can take time to take stock of our Christian experiences, exploits and successes of the past. It helps us, beyond the six things listed above, to know where we are spiritually. Gideon knew that God was not with Israel because he recalled all the wonders and miracles that their fathers told him.

RECOMMITMENT BY ISRAEL (Joshua 24:14-25; John 20:30, 31; 1 Peter 5:2, 3; Ezekiel 33:13)

After he had reminded them of the goodness of God, he charged them, **“Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD”** (verse 14). The whole essence of the testimonies he shared with them was to make them come to a life of new commitment. He told them to put away all the idolatrous acts they got from their fathers and serve the Lord. The essence of preaching, teaching and sharing testimonies is to encourage people to serve God and be more committed to Him. Hence, all our testimonies and exhortations should end with a tone of encouraging people to serve God. Be that as it may, preaching should not sound like we are forcing people to do something but rather like an appeal to their conscience

to do something. **“And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD”** (verse 15). Besides, showing a good example might even be more convincing.

Question 5: *What is the effect of showing examples to the people we preach to?*

As soon as Joshua said that, **“the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods”** (verse 16). They started recounting His goodness to them though they still had the traces of idolatry. They concluded by saying, **“therefore will we also serve the LORD; for he is our God”** (verse 17, 18). Our own example of commitment to what we preach as Christians could, and indeed will, have positive impact on those we talk to.

“And Joshua said unto the people, ye cannot serve the LORD: for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If ye forsake the LORD, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good” (verses 19, 20). Joshua knew the people too well than they thought. He knew their tendencies towards idolatry. He made them know that God would punish them if they relapsed into it though he had treated them well. This point condemns the teaching of being saved forever once you are saved, regardless of whether you sin again or not. When a saint commits sin, his righteousness is forgotten. So, Joshua made the people to put away the idols in their midst and not just brag of and bank on their past victories. And he **“made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem”** (verse 25). If any youth has any trace of sin in his life, he should follow the example of the children of Israel and make a recommitment to the Lord. Then, he can renew his covenant with God.

RECORD FOR ISRAEL (Joshua 24:26-28; 1 Timothy 4:6; 2 Timothy 1:6; 2:14; 2 Peter 1:12-15; Jude 5)

“And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the LORD” (verse 26). After the children of Israel renewed their covenant with God, Joshua did two things: he recorded the word of the covenant of the people and also set up a great stone for physical memorial. Both actions were geared towards helping the people to remember their promise to the Lord. **“And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the LORD which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God”** (verse 27). After these, he **“let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance”** (verse 28).

One quality of a good leader is the ability to help the people he leads to remember important issues of their life. **“If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained”** (1 Timothy 4:6). Different leaders in the Bible did it in different ways they considered effective to them. Some used repeated teachings through letter writing as was in the case of Paul and Peter. **“Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth”** (2 Peter 1:12). As God’s ministers, whatever means we could adopt to make people to always remember and be conscious of God’s word and their commitment to it should be used.

The effect of such skill is a lasting commitment on the part of those who are led. We are told that this generation of Israel and those that survived them served the Lord while those who neither knew the Lord nor have anything for which they could remember Him did not. **“And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim”** (Judges 2:10, 11).

LESSON 600

THE DEATH OF JOSHUA

Memory Verse: “*And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old*” (Joshua 24:29).

TEXT: Joshua 24:29-33

This is the very last chapter in the book of Joshua and also in his life history. Joshua was one of the twelve spies sent by Moses to view Canaan. He and Caleb alone brought a positive report of the possibility of possessing the land. Hence, while all others in his generation perished, Joshua and Caleb remained till they got to Canaan. Due to his spiritual growth and maturity, the Lord chose him to take over the leadership of Israel from Moses. He had been doing well in leading Israel. Many battles were fought and won under his leadership; many lands and captives were taken. There were also periods of failure and defeat in his ministry. But now, he died a fulfilled man. He was indeed a paradigm (i.e. an example) of courage and conquest.

THE BURIAL OF A PARADIGM (Joshua 24:29-31; Hebrews 9:27; Acts 20:17-27; Ecclesiastes 9:10; Psalm 90:10, 12; 92:12-14)

“And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old” (verse 29). This verse contains a lot of information for all living Christians. After the people renewed their covenant with God, Joshua the son of Nun died. What if he did not bother to reconcile the children of Israel to God? He would have still died. But thank God that he did it with courage as though he knew he might be talking to them for the last time.

Question 1: *What lesson can we learn from the death of Joshua?*

“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). Except for those

who will go in the rapture, death is an appointment that all men must keep. Therefore, we must fill our lives with profitable and productive service before death comes. Paul the apostle also used this principle in his life. Every time he had an opportunity to preach and to exhort, he did it as though no opportunity may come again. **“And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God”** (Acts 20:25-27).

Whenever we are preaching to people, we must do it as though it could be the last opportunity we could ever have. Till his death, Joshua was referred to as **“the servant of the LORD”**. Those who are God’s ministers will still bring forth fruit at old age. As for Joshua, he **“died, being an hundred and ten years old”**. This was a long life compared to what the psalmist said. It is good to see how God preserves the lives of His ministers who are involved in Kingdom service. The psalmist made a request to God to **“teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom”** (Psalm 90:12). We need the wisdom of God to spend every moment of our lives very profitably. The preacher tells us: **“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest”** (Ecclesiastes 9:10). All the opportunities we have to meet the (spiritual and physical) needs of people should not be abused as there will be none in heaven. All the work we can ever do; all the wisdom we can ever display and all the devices we can ever employ are only useful and beneficial here. The beauty of it is that if we use them well, then, we are laying up for ourselves some eternal riches (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

“And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathserah, which is in mount Ephraim, on the north side of the hill of Gaash” (verse 30). Eventually, Joshua was buried by Israel. But, after his death, the legacy he left was still standing. **“And Israel served the LORD all**

the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the LORD, that he had done for Israel” (verse 31). His mentoring and leadership style produced a lasting and sustained ministry, at least, for a generation. He taught and challenged the children of Israel and all their leaders to serve the Lord.

THE BURIAL OF A PATRIARCH (Joshua 24:32; 50:25, 26; Exodus 13:19; Ecclesiastes 5:4,5; Psalm 15:1,2,4; Genesis 33:18-20)

“And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver: and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph” (verse 32). Joseph was one of the heads of the tribes of Israel, that is, he was a patriarch. From him alone, two tribes sprang forth: Manasseh and Ephraim. He died long ago in Egypt. This is within the first century of the children of Israel in Egypt. For over three hundred years, the children of Israel had kept the body of Joseph because he had made them swear that they would take his body along to the Land of Promise. **“And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence”** (Genesis 50:25). The children of Israel, right from the time of Moses, committed themselves to this oath till the day when they buried the bones of the body of Joseph.

Question 2: *What lesson can we learn from the commitment of the children of Israel to the oath made with Joseph?*

When we make vows, we should be committed to it. **“When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay”** (Ecclesiastes 5:4, 5). Sometimes, we may have even vowed to our own hurt and inconvenience, it is a mark of righteousness to still keep to the terms of the vow. **“LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He**

that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart...In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not” (Psalm 15:1, 2, 4).

Question 3: *What can be learnt from the preservation and the use of the land that Jacob bought?*

When Israel came back from Padan Aram, he bought a parcel of land from Shechem for him to spread his tent. This was even before the Egyptian captivity. The interesting thing is that when his son came back to Canaan, they were able to identify and preserve this precious inheritance. How lovely it is if we can keep, preserve and still use the standard of holiness that we have received in the church even for generations to come.

THE BURIAL OF A PRIEST (Joshua 24:33; Exodus 6:25; 28:1; 20:12, 26-28; Numbers 25:1-13; Judges 20:26-28)

“And Eleazar the son of Aaron died; and they buried him in a hill that pertained to Phinehas his son, which was given him in mount Ephraim” (verse 33). Eleazar was a descendant of Aaron. Aaron’s family was given the office of the priesthood and he was their high priest. After him, his son Eleazar stood in his office. And now, he too died and was to be buried.

Question 4: *What lessons can we learn from the family of Eleazar?*

“And Eleazar Aaron’s son took him one of the daughters of Putiel to wife; and she bare him Phinehas: these are the heads of the fathers of the Levites according to their families” (Exodus 6:25). Eleazar married just one wife as a priest. Though not much was said about the family background of his wife but the result of their union on the child training was good. They raised a child that was responsible and God-fearing; a man who stood against immorality and wickedness. They raised a child that became a priest himself. All Christian leaders should, as much as they spend time on the work of the ministry, also spend time on the training of their children. Moreover, all youths should receive the godly training of their parents

so that it can be well with them. **“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise ;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth”** (Ephesians 6:1-3).

LESSON 601

JUDAH'S VICTORY OVER THE CANAANITES

Memory Verse: "And Judah went up; and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand: and they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men" (Judges 1:4).

TEXT: Judges 1:1-20.

Every book of the Bible has divine lessons and instructions for heaven-bound saints. The Scripture says: "**For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope**" (Romans 15:4). This is very true, clear and fulfilled in the book of Judges. The book of Judges marks the beginning of Israel's fall and failure in their walk with God. The spiritual and moral condition of Israel had deteriorated compared with the time of Joshua. This generation that came after the elders that outlived Joshua became complacent and relegated the word of God. The purpose of this book therefore, is to expose the cause of Israel's downward journey from God and the consequences of their sin, backsliding and compromise. These conditions spread through the whole book and there was no steadfastness in their salvation. The Judges were used by God to preserve their understanding that personal faith in God and obedience to His word were the only way to permanent victory over their enemies.

PROFIT OF A SPIRITUAL AND COMPETENT SUCCESSOR (Judges 1:1,2; Exodus 18:13-21; Acts 6:3,4; 2 Corinthians 4:1,2; Nehemiah 7:1,2; Isaiah 58:11; Psalm 32:8; 48:14)

"Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them?"(Judges 1:1). The life of Joshua was an exemplary

and challenging one. His death created a great vacuum in Israel that no single leader was able to fill. **“And Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the LORD, that he had done for Israel”** (Joshua 24:31). The spiritual influence of Joshua was outstanding because those who served with him knew the power and the word of God. Hence, they were placed in positions of authority and were capable to guide and direct the whole congregation. However, when this generation passed on, their places were filled by men who knew less of God’s power, importance of obedience and necessity of holiness. Hence, Israel fell into disobedience and were oppressed by their enemies. This is why there is need for spiritual and competent successor in the church.

Question 1: *What were the consequences of not having a competent successor after the elders that outlived Joshua?*

“In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6). The consequences of lack of successor are poor standards and lack of steadfastness in the word of God. It also destroys the orderliness in the system of administration.

Question 2: *What are the qualifications of a spiritual leader?*

The qualifications of a spiritual leader include the following: (i) the person must have current spiritual experiences with the Lord. Such spiritual experiences are salvation from sins, purity of heart and the baptism in the Holy Spirit. (ii) He must have a working knowledge of the scriptures. (iii) He must be faithful and God-fearing. (iv) He must be ready to obey God at all times. (v) He must be humble and meek. (vi) He must be ready to make necessary sacrifice for the expansion of God’s kingdom. (vii) He must love God above the work itself.

“Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight

against them? **And the LORD said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand**" (Judges 1:1, 2). Decision determines destiny. We take decisions every day in our lives. There are many areas of our lives that require our taking decisions.

Question 3: *Mention specific areas that we need to take decision in our lives.*

"O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). Every area in our lives requires God's guidance. Specific areas include choice of friends, course of study, school to attend, where to live or work, the person to marry, etc. Every decision should be taken according to the leading of the Spirit of God after prayer on the issue. Also, every decision must be according to the written word of God. The promise of God our Father to all His children is: **"For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death"** (Psalm 48:14).

PARTNERSHIP FOR SUCCESS AND COURAGE THROUGH STEADFASTNESS (Judges 1:2-18,20; Isaiah 41:6,7; Romans 16:1-16; 1 Corinthians 3:8,9; Proverbs 27:17)

The children of Israel, due to fear, allowed idolatrous Canaanites to dwell in the land. They patterned their lives after them, intermarried and became contaminated with their abomination (Judges 2:13; 3:6). This relationship weakened their spiritual strength and the enemy nations took advantage of their state and attacked them. This led to humiliation, defeat, frustration, death, doom and doubt in the ability of God. It was in the face of one of these attacks and oppressions that the children of Israel asked God who should go for them. In responding to this question, Judah was chosen. **"And the LORD said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand. And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him. And Judah went up; and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand: and they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand**

men” (Judges 1:2-4). As Judah was picked to lead the children of Israel against the Canaanites, he also called Simeon to join arms with him. The victory was outstanding. Ten thousand Canaanites were slain! Adonibezek, king of Jerusalem was subdued and his toes and great toes were cut off.

The relationship between Judah and Simeon is called partnership. Partnership is an arrangement to put resources together for the benefits of the people involved for a certain purpose. The case of Paul the apostle and his fellow laborers is a typical example. This is similar to youths teaming up to accomplish a profitable purpose.

Question 4: *What are the benefits of team work?*

The benefits of team work are as follow: (1) It covers up for individual weakness; (2) It brings about better performance; (3) It makes resources abound; (4) It leads to better understanding; and (5) It gives a sense of fulfilment and encouragement. If you join courage with steadfastness, success will come.

PUNISHMENT AND SUFFERING THROUGH COMPROMISE AND SIN (Judges 1:19; Deuteronomy 7:2; 12:2; 20:17; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18)

“And the LORD was with Judah; and he drove out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron” (verse 19). Immediately after victories through a successful partnership between Judah and Simeon, there were series of failures. These were failures that came through compromise, sin and disobedience. God, on several occasions, had warned Israel against co- habiting with the Canaanites and other idolatrous nations. But Israel did not take God’s command seriously. They failed to drive out these nations and collected tributes from some of them.

Thus, right from the first chapter to the concluding chapter of Judges, we see compromise among the children of Israel. They did not drive out or destroy the Canaanites as God commanded them (Exodus 23:24; Deuteronomy 7:2; 12:2; 20:17). From the first chapter, the list of incomplete

conquest is given to us. Examples are: Judah (verse 19), Benjamin (verse 21), Manasseh (verse 28), Ephraim (verse 29), Zebulun (verse 30) Asher (verse 31). Naphtali (verse 33), Dan (verse 34) and Joseph (verse 35). This was Israel's greatest undoing. Incomplete removal of sin or evil influence always leads to constant defeat and failure. They meted out half-measured treatment against sin and shunned the command of God. **“But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee: That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the LORD your God”** (Deuteronomy 20:17, 18).

Question 5: *Why did the children of Israel fail to drive out the Canaanites completely?*

All the tribes failed to drive out the Canaanites from the land completely because: (a) they lacked the discipline and courage to obey God; (b) their spiritual and moral decay had affected their strength in God; (c) they were afraid of the enemy nations (verse 19); and (d) they made some gain from them. If we fail to drive out sin from our lives, it will bring defeat and failure.

Question 6: *What is the solution to the problem of sin?*

“Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification” (Romans 4:23-25). The solution to sin problem is repentance. If sin has caused suffering, that is not the end of the road. There is still hope. Supplication from a repentant heart will bring salvation and deliverance. **“Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses** (Psalm 107:6).

LESSON 602

THE CONSEQUENCES OF INCOMPLETE OBEDIENCE

Memory Verse: “And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (1 Samuel 15:22)

Text: Judges 1:21-36; 2:1-10

Israel had been allocated their portion of lands by Joshua. And all the tribes were expected to destroy the enemies who were still occupying the lands. After the destruction of those inhabitants in the lands allocated to the tribes, they were meant to settle down. However, we find out that many of the tribes of Israel decided on their own to tolerate the remnants against the instruction earlier given by the Lord: **“Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee”** (Exodus 23:32, 33).

Question 1: *In what ways can a youth exhibit incomplete obedience today?*

Many youths presumed to be serious minded often give several flimsy excuses to justify their continuance in sin. They sometimes say they were forced, deceived or assumed their sin was to ensure other people do not suffer. Some call lies white lies while others base their actions on the environmental factors around them. However, the Scripture is clear on what the Lord calls sin and the consequences are great. **“Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die”** (Ezekiel 18:4). Israel suffered for their compromise and failure to fully carry out God’s express command. This led to several battles ahead of them which could have been avoided.

DELIBERATE COMPROMISE BY ISRAEL (Judges 1:21-36; Exodus 23:28-33; 1 Samuel 15:1-22)

Israel was a unique nation who was governed and managed by God. Their wars and conquest had been based on God's leading. In our last study, we saw how God gave victory to Judah and Simeon. However, the victory was short-lived because of disobedience. Almost all the tribes did not continue in full obedience to God's command to destroy all the inhabitants of the land. They compromised and left some of the people who occupied the land. **"And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem;...but they let go the man and all his family. And the man went into the land of the Hittites, and built a city, and called the name thereof Luz: which is the name thereof unto this day...neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Bethshean and her towns, nor Taanach and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor"** (Judges 1:21, 25, 26, and 27). Many of the tribes left some of the inhabitants of the land and this became a great stumbling block for them later.

Question 2: *What are the effects of incomplete obedience to the word of God?*

"And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD?" (1 Samuel 15:18, 19). Partial obedience to the word of the Lord is not acceptable before Him. Saul, the first king of Israel, did not obey God fully, though he claimed to do so. **"And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites"** (1 Samuel 15:20). Incomplete obedience will incur the wrath of God, loss of divine privileges, terminate relationship with God and bring defeat, doom and damnation. Beware of incomplete obedience! **"And the house of Joseph, they also went up against Bethel: and the LORD was with them"** (verse 22). The house of Joseph had victory over

Bethel because **“the LORD was with them”**. When the Lord is with you, His presence, power, protection, promise and prosperity will be your portion. Therefore, seek the Lord today for His favor and mercy to enjoy this special blessing.

Question 3: *Mention some people in the Bible who enjoyed God’s abiding presence.*

The Bible is full of examples of people who enjoyed the presence of the Lord. They include: Joseph (Genesis 39:3,23), Samuel (1 Samuel 3:19), David (1 Samuel 18: 12 , 14), Hezekiah (2 Kings 18 :1 -7), Phinehas (1 Chronicles 9:20), John the Baptist (Luke 1:62-66), the church in Antioch (Acts 11:19-21), etc. The only hindrance to this blessing is sin. The counsel of the Lord for you is: **“If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles”** (Job 11:14).

“And the spies saw a man come forth out of the city, and they said unto him, Shew us, we pray thee, the entrance into the city, and we will shew thee mercy. And when he shewed them the entrance into the city, they smote the city with the edge of the sword; but they let go the man and all his family” (verses 24, 25). In our pursuit of success, we need the help of others. The spies saw a man that led them to the city and through that they had victory over their enemy and they in turn showed him mercy. We are commanded by the Lord to show mercy to others in need. **“And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise”** (Luke 10:37).

DIVINE COMMAND FOR ISRAEL’ S SEPARATION:
(Judges 2:1,2 ; Deuteronomy 7 : 2 -5 , 16 -25 ; 12 : 1 -3 ; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Revelation 18:4)

“And an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you”(Judges 2:1). Israel’s journey had been a spectacular one backed by divine manifestation of power and favor from God. They had been able to defeat

many of the kings and cities which were renowned for war and had men trained to fight. All these were in fulfillment of the promise made by the Lord to Abraham saying “...I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God” (Genesis 17:7, 8). God fulfilled His part of the promise and ensured that Israel got to the Promised Land and were able to possess their possession. God keeps His promises. “**God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?**” (Numbers 23:19). Are there promises which God has given to you today? Does it look as if those promises are delaying in fulfillment? Is there a dream which the Lord has shown you regarding your life which seems as if it cannot be fulfilled? Israel initially had a dream which looked impossible. However, they depended on God who fulfilled all His promises to them. God will not fail you, He will be right on time.

Question 4: What are some of the reasons God’s promises are not fulfilled in the lives of many believers?

Many believers today fail to receive their blessings because of sin and unbelief. “**Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear**” (Isaiah 59:1, 2). Sin deprives people of enjoying God’s favor and blessings. Hence, there is the need to always run away from all forms of sins and backsliding. The sinner needs to repent and turn away from his sinful ways, while the backslider needs to be restored. Only when this is done can one begin to receive again the favor of the Lord.

The Lord, knowing the idolatrous nature of many of these inhabitants, commanded Israel to separate themselves from the people and their culture. “**And ye shall make no**

league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars” (Judges 2:2). God knew the hearts of all the people. No wonder He cautioned them against having close relationship with the people of the land. This was to ensure that they maintained their fellowship with Him and learn from past mistakes in their journey where many perished due to their breach of God’s laws. God also wanted to avoid a situation where the old inhabitants of the land would become burdensome to Israel. However, Israel refused to obey this command of God and decided to retain some of the inhabitants of the land. Bad company of friends often put the good ones in danger. The Lord wants every genuinely converted believer to avoid any form of close relationship with the unsaved and backsliders. Light is different from darkness; hence, youths should not get engrossed in the company of the unrighteous to avoid being caught in the trap of peer pressure and joining others to go into sin. When a youths goes into sin, there is serious punishment from God. **“Though hand *join* in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished: but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered”** (Proverbs 11:21).

DAMNABLE CONSEQUENCE OF INCOMPLETE SUBMISSION (Judges 2:2–10; Exodus 23:33; 34:12; Numbers 33:55; Joshua 23:13; Judges 3:6; Psalm 106:36; 2 Chronicles 25:2; Hebrews 13:21; James 1:4; 1 Peter 5:10)

As a result of Israel’s compromise and failure to obey completely God’s instruction to **“drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places”** (Numbers 33: 52), they suffered a lot of damnable and avoidable consequences. Obedience to God must be complete. God sees the heart and judges the activities of our hearts and knows when we do not fully respond to His commandments. Our secrets are open to Him and there is nothing we can hide from Him. Hence, the need to ensure that internally and externally, our thoughts and actions should be pleasing in God’s sight. There are times that we may not fully understand the instruction which God has given to us, we are not meant to challenge His will or

question His authority. When we try to apply our human wisdom to implement or adjust God's plans, we run into trouble and miss God's ultimate desires for our lives.

After their disobedience, the Lord spoke to them through His angel, saying, **"...I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you"** (Judges 2:3). The enemies they tolerated became thorns in their flesh. Permissive will often become thorns and cause pains in the lives of believers. Partial obedience also brings along lots of sorrows like Israel passed through. After the Lord revealed to them the error of their actions, they wept; yet, their weeping could not change the problem they had caused for themselves.

Question 5: *How can a youth avoid the consequences of their wrong and sinful actions?*

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance " (2 Peter 3:9). God does not want any youth to perish. He wants every youth to be blessed and make heaven at last. But sinners need to get saved before they can reap the blessings. Believers need to ensure they always obey the word of the Lord.

Question 6: *Is it possible to completely obey the Lord?*

Although the children of Israel did not comply fully with God's instruction, we still find a few in Israel who were fully committed to the Lord. Elijah stood as one of the prophets; Daniel was a committed believer with an excellent spirit; Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego stood for the truth. Youths can stand for the truth today. Joshua was so committed to the Lord that all those who worked as elders with him continued obeying the Lord even after his death. **"And Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the LORD, that he had done for Israel "** (Joshua 24:31). The Lord wants us to continue serving Him, living one day at a time by His grace. He wants us to be steadfast and unmovable,

abounding in the word and work of the Lord, knowing that He, the Faithful One, would fully reward us in due time.

LESSON 603

DIVINE CHASTISEMENT FOR ISRAEL'S BACKSLIDING

Memory Verse: “*Israel hath cast off the thing that is good: the enemy shall pursue him*” (Hosea 8:3).

TEXT: Judges 2:11-23

The children of Israel in our text often went back into sin despite all that God did to bring them into a right relationship with Himself. This is called backsliding. God punished them for backsliding by making some heathen nations around them to afflict them.

Question 1: *What is backsliding?*

Backsliding is a state of slipping or sliding back from one's spiritual steadfastness. As revealed in the scriptures, it is a state that the Lord detests (Revelation 2:4, 5). God has never been favorably disposed to any backslider. He sent Ezekiel to declare to the people that, “**When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it**” (Ezekiel 33:13).

Question 2: *What do you understand about the doctrine of eternal security?*

From the foregoing, one can easily conclude that the doctrine of once saved, always saved regardless of one's actions is not spiritual. Besides, it is clear that God will punish all backsliders.

THE DISTRESS OF A RUINED PEOPLE (Judges 2:11-15; Deuteronomy 28:15, 49 - 55; Proverbs 1:24-30; Zephaniah 1:17; 2 Samuel 2 2: 7; 1 Kings 1:29; Psalm 118:5, 6; 2 Chronicles 28:22-27; Luke 21:25-28)

“And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim: And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the

land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger” (verses 11, 12). God is kind and loving. It is never in His nature to take pleasure in distressing or afflicting anybody (Lamentation 3:31-33). But, our text reveals to us the reason the children of Israel were ruined and also distressed. They “**did evil in the sight of the LORD**”, “**forsook the LORD**”, “**followed other gods**” and “**provoked the LORD to anger**”.

Question 3: *Why are some youths oppressed and afflicted today?*

The Bible tells us that when we forsake the Lord and His words, we would be oppressed and afflicted by our enemies. The oppression would aggravate if we are unrepentant till we become distressed. Moses told the people that if they disobeyed the word of God, their enemies would ruin them until they became distressed. “**The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand... And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the LORD thy God hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee**” (Deuteronomy 28:49-55). Another cause of distress is refusing to hear God’s instructions either as taught in the church or read personally from the Scripture. When people sin against the Lord, it leads to distresses, afflictions and oppressions. “**And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them...and they were greatly distressed**” (verses 14, 15).

Question 4: *What can a backslider do to come out of distress?*

There are two natural reactions in a distressing condition: some could behave like Ahaz (a king in Judah) and some others like David. But, in either case, we have consequences. As for Ahaz, the Bible says: “**And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against**

the LORD: this is that king Ahaz. For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus...But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel” (2 Chronicles 28:22). When some people are in fear and distresses, they seek help from spiritualist and continue in their sins. They fail to understand that their problems cannot be solved through such means. But, as for King David, he said, **“In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried to my God...”** (2Samuel 22:7). The result was that his prayer was heard and the Lord set him in a large place so that he was no more afraid of any man. The first step to take when distress comes is to confess and repent of all known sins.

There is a future and global distress coming upon all men who do not believe the gospel. **“And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring”** (Luke 21:25). It is only those who are saved in Christ that would escape that distress (1 Thessalonians 5:9; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-17).

THE DESPISED RESTORATION PLAN (Judges 2:16-19; 1Corinthians 1:18-24; Matthew 21:42; Acts 4:10-12; 13:41; Proverbs 29:1; Romans 9:33)

“Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them. And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so” (verses 16, 17). God took the initiative to help the children of Israel out of the hands of their enemies. So, He **“raised up judges, which delivered them”**. Unfortunately, **“they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring”**. If any did obey, they only did that as long as the judges were alive, after which **“they turned quickly out of the way”**. They despised the plan that God made for their deliverance and salvation from their captors. They never turned **“from their stubborn way”**.

Question 5: *How can we identify those who despise God’s salvation plan?*

This kind of attitude to God's plan of salvation still finds expression in our generation as it was in the early church. **"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness..."** (1 Corinthians 1:18). There are many people who, because of the simplicity of the Gospel, would not believe. They have learnt so much of non-essential things that they know nothing about the most essential thing: the knowledge of salvation. They count every idea about salvation as **"the foolishness of preaching"**. Unfortunately, it is the thing that men despised that is now important to their salvation. **"Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"** (Acts 4:10-12).

For the Israelites, the result of despising God's plan was not pleasant. Their enemies **"oppressed them and vexed them"**.

Question 6: *What are the consequences of despising God's salvation plan?*

It never pays anyone to despise God's way. **"Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you"** (Acts 13:41). Those who despise God's salvation plan would perish. Those who are stubborn in their errors would suddenly be destroyed without remedy. Paul tells us the best attitude to God's salvation plan, **"...whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed"** (Romans 9:33).

THE DIVINE RESOLUTION ON RETROGRESSIVE PEOPLE (Judges 2:20-23; Genesis 2:15-17; 3:6, 16-19; Deuteronomy 11:26-28; Proverbs 1:24-26; Isaiah 1:19, 20)

"And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and he said, because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have

not hearkened unto my voice; I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died” (verses 20, 21). When God saw that this people persistently went back to their old way of living, He resolved that He would **“not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died”**. The sole reason was to **“prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not”** (verse 22). He wanted to leave them with the opportunity to choose between good and bad. Those nations were very idolatrous and immoral. God, leaving them among the Israelites, wanted to see what choice the Israelites would make. **“Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out hastily; neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua”** (verse 23).

Man is a free moral agent; as such, God always gives him the right to decide what to do with his life. In the Garden of Eden, He presented man with the opportunity to choose to obey or disobey. He put trees in the Garden from which man should eat and that from which he should not eat. When man disobeyed, God decided to send him out of the Garden and also passed a sentence of death on him. Similarly, when God gives opportunity to people to choose between good or bad, obedience and disobedience, His response is a function of man’s choice. If man chooses to obey, He blesses, but He brings curses if man does otherwise.

Question 7: Why does God leave Christian youths in this sinful world?

Even after we become born again, God does not take us to a kind of all-believer concentration camp where we meet or interact with fellow believers alone; neither does He take us out of the world. **“I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world”** (1Corinthians 5:9, 10). Sins are all present around us and God is waiting to see what we would do when opportunity to sin presents itself. It is our

decision to say no that proves our love and loyalty to God. Besides, we are to influence the world around us with the truth of the gospel for good. **“Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; nor it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”** (Matthew 5:13-16).

LESSON 604

FOOLISHNESS OF HUMAN WISDOM

Memory Verse: *“For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent”* (1 Corinthians 1:19).

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

The quest for knowledge in natural sciences, art and philosophy dates back to the period before our Lord was born, about 1500 BC. There were scientists, architects and philosophers even before the New Testament. So, seeking knowledge was not just a new thing as at the time when Paul was preaching (Acts 17:16-21). The unfortunate thing was that many of those philosophers were not righteous. Their morally bankrupt lives and lack of faith in God interjected with whatever they had to teach their society at that time. They had taught many things that could not be found in the Scripture to be true. So, there was so much ignorance in spiritual things that the world then was in so much conflict with the gospel.

To make matter worse, the religious people who were supposed to be knowledgeable also knew nothing. They used all the knowledge they had to fight against the very embodiment of God’s word. They held on to shadow for so long that they could not reconcile it with the real thing when it came. They missed the benefits of the saving gospel. They were only looking for signs that would perish with time. But in our text, the writer pointed to Christ as the wisdom of God. Therefore, anyone who receives and accepts Him today is wise to salvation.

SAVING POWER OF THE GOSPEL (1 Corinthians 1:18-21; 2 Corinthians 4:3, 4; 1 Timothy 1:12-16; Romans 1:16, 17)

“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (verse 18). When Paul the apostle said **“them that perish”**, he actually meant those who would eventually

perish as a result of their negative attitude to the gospel. He referred to them elsewhere as **“them that are lost”** (2 Corinthians 4:3). Usually, such people are blindfolded by the devil from the truth. They regard the word of God as **“foolishness”**. Also, their lives are characterized by unbelief. Such people would never come to accept the gospel so that they could be saved. Hence, they cannot but perish.

Question 1: Give an example of someone in the Bible whose life was changed by the gospel.

However, for those who accept and believe the gospel, the power in the gospel works in them to lead them to salvation. Hence, **“unto us which are saved it is the power of God”**. Paul the apostle gave a personal account of how he was saved and totally transformed by the gospel. **“And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me ... Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding ...that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief...”** (1 Timothy 1:12-15). It is this personal experience that Paul had which made him to say, **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek”** (Romans 1:16). All believers who have truly experienced the saving power of the gospel should also have the same resolution.

Question 2: Mention what the power of the gospel can achieve in a sinner’s life.

A sinner will receive transformation of life if he comes to receive and believe the gospel; that is, new birth experience (1 Corinthians 4: 15). He would also be established in righteousness (Romans 16:25). He would escape from condemnation into justification (John 5:24; Romans 8:1). This would lead to peace (Romans 5:1; Ephesians 2:13-17).

Unfortunately, there are many religious and learned people of the world who are void of this gracious work of God.

They have learnt so much of things that are not essential to the point that it sets them at variance with the most essential knowledge. Being void of faith and experiential knowledge, such argue and dispute about the possibility of the gospel transforming a 1 debauched man to a morally decent person. **“For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?”** (Verses 19, 20). Sadly, the more they know of the word, the farther they are from God. **“For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe”** (verse 21).

SEEKING PERISHABLES IN THE GOSPEL (1 Corinthians 1:22-24; John 2:18; 6:24-30; Matthew 6:33; Acts 17:16-21; Romans 14:17)

“For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom” (verse 22). Many people who are not ready to accept Christ look for one excuse or the other to hold on to. As for the Jews, they physically sought for Jesus as though they really would believe on Him. But Christ knew that they were not honest about their search. They wanted bread for their belly. **“When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled”** (John 6:24-26). He told them that their desire would perish. To cover up their lightness of purpose in seeking Jesus, they asked Him for what work of God they must do. Then Christ asked them to believe on Him whom the Father hath sent. Trying to escape the important and non-perishable thing again, they asked for a sign. All they were seeking were just temporal. On the other hand, **“the Greeks seek after wisdom”**. Anything any preacher

had to say about God could only be accepted if it was in agreement with their philosophical ideas. They sought in Christ the kind of knowledge they had in their 2myths. But, unfortunately for them, **“the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness”**. Hence, it became **“unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness”**.

Question 3: *What temporal things do people seek in Christ at the expense of eternal blessings?*

We also have people in our time that would come to Christ only if they could enjoy some physical things like healing, provisions, academic success and the like. They would get offended if after coming to Christ they do not have them. These things are good but should not be the basis of our seeking the Lord. The Lord says we should seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness after which all other things shall be added to us. Some other people in our generation would not believe the gospel because they cannot match the content with the scientific findings they have made. It is unfortunate that while they believe the so-called science whose life-changing effect in life they cannot account for, they push off the blessed gospel which has transformed many. **“For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power”** (1Corinthians 4:20).

SELECTIVE PRIVILEGES IN THE GOSPEL (1Corinthians 1:25-31; Titus 2:11; Matthew 22:14; Mark 16:17, 18; Luke 10:19; Ephesians 2:14-19)

“...But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us ... redemption...” (Verse 25-31). The salvation (or redemption) of God is made available to all men. Unfortunately, not everyone has got it. Moreover, not everyone will enjoy the benefits of the gospel. Salvation is one of those benefits but not everyone in the world would be saved eventually.

Question 4: *How can a sinning youth become saved?*

In order to be saved, the sinner should realize his sins. He should be sorry for and confess them to God. Besides, he should forsake them and believe Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. It is this singular act that would lead us into the

abundance of God's blessings which are reserved only for the redeemed.

Question 5: *What other privileges do we have in the gospel after salvation?*

“But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God” (verse 24). Here we are told that part of the privileges are **“the power of God, and the wisdom of God”**. The power is to exercise dominion over every evil in this present world. The wisdom is to be able to outsmart all the wiles of the devil and carry out productive evangelism. We also have the privilege of being used as God's instruments of wonders. **“...For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise...”** (Verses 25-28).

Question 6: *What is sanctification and how can it be obtained?*

We are also to enjoy righteousness and sanctification in the gospel. Sanctification is the second work of grace. It is a state of total freedom from inward struggling with sin. It is a state of perfect love for God and mankind. It is a state of freedom from carnality and frail righteousness. To be sanctified, the seeker should be born again. He should also surrender all his life to do whatever God would demand. This is what we call consecration. He should passionately pray in faith for the experience

When God does all these in our lives, it is so, **“That no flesh should glory in his presence... That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord”** (verses 29, 31).

LESSON 605

THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL REVEALED

Memory Verse: *“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God”* (1 Corinthians 2:12).

Text: 1 Corinthians 2:1-16

The gospel (good news) of Jesus Christ at this point in the history of the world was just gaining foothold in a number of countries. Due to the spiritual connotations of several parts which could not be understood by human interpretation, many were finding it difficult to explain the simplicity in the message. This confusion created more challenges as many were unable to have a full knowledge of God’s plan for man’s redemption. Paul, explaining how he went ahead to preach the gospel, states how he had to sacrifice and separate himself to be able to preach the word of God convincingly.

Question 1: *Why is it difficult for one to explain the word of God using physical and human reasoning?*

Human reasoning can only explain human activities. Divine wisdom is the only thing which one can use to understand and explain the word of God. This is why the Lord wants us to have the Holy Spirit, to be able to guide us into all truths. **“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come”** (John 16:13).

REALITY OF THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL (1 Corinthians 2:1-5; Romans 1:16; 1 Peter 1:15; Acts 26:18; Romans 13:1-3)

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with Excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God” (1 Corinthians 2:1). Paul, in

preaching the gospel, realized that the gospel was not going to be effective until preachers of the Gospel have a focus and depend fully on God. As he went to preach, he removed his natural ability and proclaimed to the people his mission to preach the gospel. Although he was a lawyer who was properly groomed in the culture of the Israelites, he had to forget about his knowledge and training to ensure that the message was preached. There are many people today who are interested in certain churches because of the eloquence of their ministers or the professed academic qualifications. These qualities should not be a determinant of which church one should attend or how much recognition one should accord the minister. God is interested in ministers who, like Paul, would be able to say **“For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified”** (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Question 2: From Paul’s ministration, which qualities can be used to properly define a focused Christian youth minister?

The youth ministry is a very delicate one. It requires the transformation of life of the most vibrant group in the church from sin to salvation, salvation to separation and separation to service. With the existence of various peer pressures, it is important for a minister involved in preaching to the youths to be focused and have a goal. Goals are stated to help define our activities. Paul had to state his goal which was to talk to them about Jesus. He was ready to spend and be spent talking about Jesus, and this helped to keep him on track. While carrying out his work, Paul said he approached the work with much fear and trembling due to the sacredness of the task at hand. What a worthy example! Where a youth minister has a defined task and prayerfully follows it, it is easier to accomplish much. The ministers would also be able to lead more people to Christ. We should appoint School Officers with conviction, faith in God and holiness for progress in the work. School Officers should be Spirit- filled individuals who are willing and ready to serve the Lord.

“And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Corinthians 2:4). Paul was able to effectively communicate the gospel with the help of the Holy Spirit. As a lawyer, he had a very logical way of speaking. In his letter to the Corinthian church, he explained to them his preaching were not spiced with human persuasive speeches but backed by the demonstration of the Holy Spirit and power. **“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life”** (John 6:63). When one allows the Holy Spirit to take control of one’s speeches and ministrations, the effect on the lives of the hearers is enormous. It ensures people’s **“...faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God”** (1 Corinthians 2:5). God expects every single believer including leaders to depend on the Holy Spirit, as we minister to lost souls. The power of the Holy Spirit is also needed in our day-to-day walk and interactions with both believers and the world.

REVELATION OF THE PLAN OF GOD (1 Corinthians 2:6-10; Psalm 24:7-10; Isaiah 53:3-8; Matthew 7:28; 16:17; Mark 6:2; Acts 10:45; 13:12; 1 Corinthians 1:26-28)

The Word of God is a mystery to be understood by the application of divine knowledge and spiritual maturity. The reason many people question the scriptures today is because they have tried to understand the truths with human philosophy and intellect. God has a plan of salvation for everyone who is willing, and the rewards of salvation are readily available for anyone who trust the Lord. Youths who are desirous of fully understanding the scriptures should avoid the use of philosophy and carnal interpretation of the gospel.

Question 3: *Mention some doctrines and scriptural topics which many still try to use human wisdom to understand.*

Some of the misunderstood doctrines include the origin, personality and power of the Almighty God, the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, the atoning death and supernatural resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Trinity and the operations

of the Holy Spirit, the sanctity and permanent nature of marriage, working of miracles, the coming resurrection of all redeemed saints and the unity and bond that should exist among believers. Misunderstanding of the scriptures had always been a challenge. When Jesus Christ finished ministering to the people at the mount, they were astonished at his teaching as they wondered where He got that knowledge from without knowing that His source of power and unction was from heaven.

“For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him” (John 3:34).

In our text today, Paul explained the mystery behind the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He further explained that many of the rulers of the time did not understand the purpose of Christ’s coming to the earth. Many did not understand that Jesus Christ was the King of kings and Lord of lords and that this was **“... the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory”** (1 Corinthians 2:7). Christ’s place as the Son of God and His coming to redeem the world had been ordained before the world. If the princes (rulers) of the land had understood the purpose of Christ’s coming; **“... had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory”** (1 Corinthians 2:8).

However, to the glory of God, the crucified Christ shed His blood so that man could receive salvation. **“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace”** (Ephesians 1:7). Christ’s suffering was not in vain. It provided eternal life in heaven for all who are willing. And Paul, while giving the invitation to all those who were ready, further explained that the rewards awaiting those who willingly gave their lives to Christ was enormous. Our rewards are not just in this earth alone: there are unquantifiable great riches awaiting the redeemed. **“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him”** (1 Corinthians 2:9). God wants everyone to continue in His love and keep on serving Him. It may be

difficult to understand or appreciate the unfathomable bliss and joy that await believers. This cannot be understood by man's wisdom **"But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God"** (1 Corinthians 2:10).

Question 4: *What are some of the benefits that await a saved youth?*

There are many benefits awaiting a saved youth. The youth is a child of God and can pray to the Father to receive what he desires. He would be able to live a righteous life here on earth and live victoriously over temptations. Finally, there are mansions awaiting every believer in heaven. Jesus Christ says, **"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were not so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there ye may be also*"** (John 14:1-3).

RESISTANCE TO THE PURPOSE OF THE GOSPEL: (1 Corinthians 2:11–16; 1 Peter 1:21; Philippians 2:5, 6)

The revelation of the mystery of Christ is revealed only to those who walk in the Spirit. This is one of the divine proofs of the Bible as being Spirit-inspired. The Holy Spirit can explain and clarify to the believer the things we do not understand. **"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God"** (1 Corinthians 2:12). The saints of old and the apostles were dependent on the Holy Spirit. This was a major driver of their convictions leading them not only to draw closer to the Lord but also to preach Christ fervently to the lost souls. Youths need to be properly convinced about the Lord before they can faithfully preach Christ to others.

However, there is a strong resistance from within man towards the scriptures. **"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned"** (1 Corinthians

2: 14). Whenever we operate with the human mentality in the application or understanding of God's Word, we allow carnal reasoning to interpret the things of the Spirit. The carnal mind understands only the things of this world and **"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God"** (Romans 8:7, 8). The Spirit-led mind is the one that will be able to discern the purpose of Christ's coming, holiness and heaven without losing the required human power of discernment and judgment about common things that are normal. **"For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ"** (1 Corinthians 2:16).

Question 5: *How can a youth get the mind of Christ?*

A youth can get the mind of Christ if he repents from all known sins, lives a life of daily victory over all forms of sins and commits his ways to the Lord. Without salvation, the youth will still have this internal struggling within his mind about the truths of the word of God and the eternal rest awaiting all believers. If you are not saved, come to the Cross for the blood of Jesus is potent to cleanse every soul.

LESSON 606

RENDERING ACCEPTABLE SPIRITUAL SERVICE

Memory Verse: *“Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear”* (Hebrews 12:28).

TEXT: 1Corinthians 3:1-23

Paul the apostle heard a report through the house of Chloe that the Corinthian church had contentions and divisions. They had preferences for some preachers. Besides, he also heard that there was a terrible spirit of immorality among them. Then, with the eyes of the Spirit, he told them he could not address them as spiritual men but carnal. He saw in their midst what ordinary men who had no grace could have done. Hence, he rebuked and counseled them. He told them that a life of holiness and spiritual soundness is what can make services rendered to God more meaningful.

Question 1: *What can we learn from the way Paul handled the report he received about the Corinthian church?*

Youth leaders, upon receiving a genuine negative report about any of their sheep, should make adequate effort to talk to the person concerned. All demands made on them about serving and responsibilities in the church should be put on hold and much attention should be given to helping the youth to come to a spiritually balanced stage. Paul said, **“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ”** (verse 1). He had the right perspective of their spiritual state in mind and addressed them accordingly. He did not border them now about all the issues of giving which he later talked about. He was very focused and direct in telling them their spiritual state and the consequence of remaining in such state. **“For ye are yet carnal... If any**

man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy” (verses 3, 17). So, we should know the spiritual level of those we lead and ensure that we only expose them to what is appropriate for that level.

MARKS OF CARNALITY IN THE CHURCH (1Corinthians 3:1-4; 2:14; Hebrews 5:12, 13; Romans 8:7; John 6:24-30, 60, 66; James 4:1-3; Revelation 3:14-20)

“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ” (verse 1). The apostle Paul had a true picture of the church at Corinth. He regarded them **“as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ”**. He pictured clearly what they did that made him say so. These are for us as spotlights to know when carnality is coming into our individual life or into the Church. To be **“carnal”** is to be worldly minded; it is putting undue emphasis on 1ephemeral things more than eternal things.

Question 2: *What are the marks of carnality in the life of Christian youths today?*

“I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able” (verse 2). When there is carnality in the life of any youth, he would not be able to understand the deep things of God. He would often argue against sound teaching. Also, there would be some inward inclination to strife, envy and contentions. There would be segregation and partiality. Small matter can easily push the person off balance. This was the reason Paul said, **“For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?”** (Verses 3, 4).

Other Bible passages also tell us what the marks of carnality are. A carnal person will not make meaning out of whatever the Spirit of God says to the church and will not grow in the use of the word of God to solve life’s problems. They would ever be learning and never come to a stage when they are able to teach and help others. Carnality makes obedience to God more difficult, if not totally impossible. It puts the

soul at variance with God. **“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be”** (Romans 8:7). Carnality makes the mind to put emphasis on physical things more than the spiritual. Some followers of Christ who came with carnal mind, seeking bread for their belly, were also asking for signs before they could believe. The words of faith and the wonders of His ministry were not sufficient to convince them that He was the Messiah.

Question 3: *What are the consequences of carnality?*

The consequences of carnal mindedness are very frightful. The first thing is that the level of the revelation of God’s Spirit to the concerned person or group will drop (Amos 8:11). Paul began to ration his words to the church at Corinth when he saw carnality among them. **“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you...”** Carnality shuts the door of opportunity to serve. It turns us against God and leads to spiritual slumber. The worst of it is that it could lead to total backsliding. The church at Laodicea is another picture of carnality. They pride themselves in their physical prosperity when there was no spiritual vitality. Christ said, **“...So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth”**. Carnality leads to divine rejection. At the end, it leads to eternal death.

It should then be considered an urgent matter to help people who are in carnality come out of it. To come out of carnality, Christ has the best solution. The advice He gave to the Laodicean church is still the best. There is need for genuine repentance.

MINISTERIAL COOPERATION IN THE CHURCH: (1Corinthians 3:5-15; 1:12, 14; 12:14-26; 14:29-31; 16:10 John 4:36-38; Hebrews 12:28)

The Corinthian church already had factions among them. Some were inclined to Paul and some others to Apollos. As a man, he should have been so excited that some people took side with him against someone else. But Paul was not comfortable with this spirit. Because the Spirit of Christ was in Him, he could not stand the division among the brethren against other brethren who also stood for the

truth. He did not want any undue honor and loyalty that divides the body of Christ. **“Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?”** (Verse 5). He made it clear that he was not specially different or better than Apollos but that both of them were God’s ministers. As a matter of fact, whatever any of them was able to do was **“even as the Lord gave to every man”**.

Question 4: How should youths who are engaged in God’s service conduct themselves?

Furthermore, he pointed out that he had **“...planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase”** (verse 6). That means, though they did what God required them to do but the success of it was from the Lord of the work Himself. He opined that the one who plants is not of greater value than the one who waters and that neither of these two is of any value as the **“...God that giveth the increase”** (verse 7). By this, Paul teaches us how to avoid crises in the ministry. Anytime we emphasize the person of ourselves above the other people we are working with, the result is division and factions among God’s people. Should there be any such division at all, the way to solving it is to shift people’s attention from persons of men unto God.

“Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one...” (Verse 8). Another thing that Paul opens our eyes to is the need for ministers to work and team together as one. Competing against and seeking to outshine one another is not good for the body of Christ. **“For we are laborers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building”** (verse 9). The builders do not achieve anything if they fight and oppose one another. They all have one focus, to build according to specification. The mason has nothing to gain working against the electrical technician and so on. Each of them has something peculiar to do. Also, in the body of Christ, each of us has something to do. We are to complement ourselves in what we do. Paul said, **“...I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon”** (verse 10). We should be able to add value to what others do.

Question 5: What is the danger of offering a less quality service to God?

Paul went further to tell us the foundation for an acceptable ministry, “...which is **Jesus Christ**” (verse 11). He admonished everyone to offer quality service that would endure the test of heaven. Some people’s service could be likened to “...**gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble**” (verse 12). How acceptable it is, “...**shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire**” (verses 13-15). If the work is acceptable, he shall receive a reward but if not he shall suffer loss. If we offer less quality service to God, the result is to suffer loss. The Scripture points out the things we need for our service to be acceptable to God: grace, reverence and godly fear.

MANDATORY COUNSEL TO THE CHURCH (1Corinthians 3:16-23; 6:19; Romans 12:1, 2; 2 Corinthians 6:16; 1 Peter 2:5)

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (verses 16, 17). Paul had already told the church how ministers could serve God acceptably. Now, he turns to individuals. He stresses that our body is God’s temple and that it should be dedicated to Him. If any defilement is allowed in the body, it would lead to destruction. He counsels the church on the need for holiness. He told the Romans church also that to serve God acceptably requires a holy life and a renewed mind. **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God”** (Romans 12:1,2).

Question 6: *What is the danger of allowing worldly wisdom in the church?*

He warns the church of self-conceitedness. **“Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise”** (verse 18). Whatever the knowledge we have acquired which ranks us among the wise people of this world (whether in science or technology) can make us to be so deluded that we would think we already know everything. The danger is that it will not allow us to learn from the church with readiness and tenderness of heart. Unfortunately, **“...the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness”** (verse 19). The more they try to pry into the wonderful works of God, the more confused they become. All they know, compared to the depth of the mystery of God, is vain (verse 20). So, it is of no use to pride or glory in being connected to any man if God has already given us all things that we have in Christ (verses 21-23).

LESSON 607

STEWARDSHIP OF BELIEVERS

Memory Verse: *“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”* (1 Corinthians 4:1, 2).

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 4:1-21

The purpose of God saving us from sins is to serve Him faithfully and in humility. This is the call of God to all His children in all ages. Our text brings the challenge of being faithful to the Lord with humility as we serve Him on earth. These are the virtues that permit our service to be acceptable before God. It is not how much service you render to God but how faithful in little things with a humble heart before Him. Therefore, let us examine the way we render our service to God. **“And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ”** (Acts 20:17-21).

CALL TO BE FAITHFUL IN GOD’S SERVICE (1 Corinthians 4:1-5; Revelation 17:14; 2:10; Matthew 25:21-23; 3 John 5; Romans 2:1-11)

“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” (1 Corinthians 4:1, 2). The test of our service to the Lord is how faithful we are before Him. The children of God who

are involved in His service are called **“the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God”**.

Question 1: *Who is a steward?*

A steward is a person who has the duty to serve the master who employed him. A steward of the mysteries of God is one appointed by God to serve Him by ensuring he administers the gospel truths to everyone around him. Therefore, every Christian youth is called of God to be a steward. Hence, for every Christian youth to fulfil this duty, he must be faithful to Him that called him.

Question 2: *State the scriptural characteristics of a faithful steward.*

“And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it” (Colossians 4:17). The characteristics of a faithful minister of God include trustworthiness (2 Kings 12:15), fear of the Lord (2 Kings 19:9), holiness (2 Kings 19:9), orderliness (2 Chronicles 31:12), etc. Examples of those who were faithful in Bible days were Moses (Numbers 12: 7), Tychicus (Ephesians 6: 21, 22), Epaphras (Colossians 1:7), Timothy (1 Corinthians 4:17), Hananiah (Nehemiah 7:1, 2), etc. When we are faithful to the Lord, He also is faithful to reward us abundantly. **“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister”** (Hebrews 6:10).

Question 3: *Does God permit Christian youths to judge one another?*

“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God” (verse 5). The Scripture does not permit us to judge anyone or thing; rather, we should leave all judgements to the Lord. When the Lord comes, He will bring to open the secret things of darkness and make manifest the deep things in the hearts of men. It is only God that can do these because nothing is hidden before Him (Hebrews 4:13). Therefore, examine the way you are living your life today (2 Corinthians 13:5).

COUNSEL TO BE HUMBLE IN GOD’S SERVICE: (1 Corinthians 4:6-13; Philippians 2:3-11; Ephesians 4:1-3; 1 Peter 5:5,6; James 4:10, 6-8; Romans 12:3)

The Scripture says: **“Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall”. “A man’s pride shall bring him low: but honor shall uphold the humble in spirit”** (Proverbs 16:18; 29:23). Pride is a dangerous vice that destroys Christian virtues. This vice was in the life of Satan and will easily destroy our service to God. It should be clear to all that we are what we are by the grace of God. Therefore, there is no reason to be puffed-up.

Question 4: *With Scripture references, state what we can receive through humility.*

“But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1 Corinthians 15:10). There is nothing we can get or achieve without humility. Humility before God and man will open a great door of opportunities to all who possess it. Humility brings conversion from sins (Matthew 18:3-5; Luke 18:9-14), promotion (James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:6), acceptable service to God (Acts 20:19), spiritual renewal and revival (Isaiah 57:15), answers to prayers (2 Chronicles 7:14), deliverance (Job 22:9), etc. However, anyone who refuses to humble himself will face the wrath of God (Exodus 10:3; Ezekiel 14:12-16).

The service of the Lord entails sacrifice and suffering. The purpose of this is not to punish anyone but sharing the lifestyle of Christ for the salvation of souls. This is the call to believers in Christ. **“For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;”** (Philippians 1:29).

Question 5: *From our text, state the sacrifice of Paul the Apostle as a minister of God.*

“For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men” (verse 9). He endured all things for the salvation of souls (1

Corinthians 4:9). He became a fool for Christ's sake (verse 10), weak and despised (verse 10), hunger, thirst and naked (verse 11), buffeted and have no dwelling place to live (verse 11), underwent tireless labor (verse 12), reviled and persecuted (verse 12) defamed (verse 13), and made as filth of the world (wretched person) (verse 13). Yet, those who received his words as the word of God from him enjoyed great benefits. From our text, these include riches and reigning as kings (verse 8), wise, strong in the Lord and honorable (verse 10). The service of God has suffered a great setback among believing youths today because they are not ready to pay the price for winning souls. The required fervency and fire to reach the unreached in our schools and neighborhood is lacking. Many are not ready to pay the price of service for God. The challenge from Him who died for your sins is: "*I gave my life for thee, My precious blood I shed; ... What hast thou giv'n for Me?*" It is not late to respond now. **"Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me"** (Isaiah 6:8). You will be remembered by what you have done for God in eternity.

CONVERSION BY THE GOSPEL THROUGH THE SAVIOUR (1 Corinthians 4:14-21; Ephesians 5:1,2; 1 Thessalonians 1:6-10; 2:14,15; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5)

"For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel" (verse 15). To be a member of the Church of the living God, one must be saved from sin. This transformation of life is called conversion or salvation from sin. This is made possible through the preaching of the gospel of Christ. As we respond by repenting, confessing of our sins and believing in Christ, we receive pardon for our sins. As we become members of the body of Christ (Church), God uses many teachers or instructors to teach us great things from His word. But the Leadership (Pastor) of the Church is the father of all the members.

"Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me" (verse 16). It takes a man of God with great spiritual grace to give such a challenge to everyone to follow. He himself followed Christ in all things.

Question 7: *In what areas can we follow Christ as Paul did?*

Today, we can follow Christ like Paul in all things. These include loving Christ with all our hearts, obedience to His words, being prayerful, preaching the gospel, sacrificial service to God, enduring all things for the sake of Christ, living in righteousness and holiness all the days of our lives, etc. An example of a person who followed Paul was Timothy. Here was Paul's testimony concerning him. **“For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church”** (verse 17).

“But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power” (verses 19, 20). Here, Paul promised to visit the church at Corinth if it is the Lord's will. We are alive to do only the will of God. The will of God is for you to be saved first from sins (2 Peter 3:9). This salvation is made possible through the power of God in Christ. Therefore, let the preaching of the gospel be done through the power of God. Paul's challenge to the Corinthian church in this respect should serve as an example to us. **“And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:**

That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1 Corinthians 2:4, 5). Have you been endued with the power of God to preach the gospel effectively in these last days? The world of youths is waiting for ministers with the gift of the Holy Ghost to turn them to Christ. You can be one of such ministers in your locality.

LESSON 608

THE PURPOSE OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Memory Verse: “Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear” (1 Timothy 5:20).

Text: 1 Corinthians 5:1-13

Discipline is one great factor that helps one to be successful in life. A society without discipline and control leads to confusion, chaos and disorderliness.

A school without discipline will produce unruly graduates. A family without discipline will produce a generation without the fear of God. In the same vein, a church without discipline will not be ready for the rapture. Church discipline is an instrument God uses to restore the required sanctity and holiness within the church. God is a principled Father and if we call ourselves His children, we need to live a principled life void of anything which would undermine His glory. In the Corinthian church, they had gone into immorality, and when it was not curbed, it reached a point where someone would have his father’s wife. This was a terrible and condemnable act that required not just discipline but punishment as it was a sin against God, man and the society. Paul was surprised that rather than rebuke and discipline the person involved, the church was still tolerating them. Hence, he had to step in to rebuke those involved in such act.

Question 1: *What do you understand by church discipline?*

Church discipline can be described as the corrective measures taken by an individual, church leaders or the congregation against the presence of sin in the life of a believer, group of believers or church. Church discipline can be applied on an individual if he has committed any form of evil, or a group of people if they have collectively been involved in evil or covered up evils committed by some other people, or against a church if they have sinned

against God. Discipline helps to create the right character within the circle of believers. It should be a continuous process within each church, fellowship of Christian family. Church discipline is the response of the leadership or membership of the church to an action committed by an individual or group of people which is known to be wrong either in action or doctrine. In extreme cases, church discipline can lead to excommunication of the offender. This is because sin can easily destroy the foundation of Christian fellowship. Therefore, a Christian youth must have self-discipline to avoid external discipline coming on him.

PEOPLE TO BE CAUTIONED AND DISCIPLINED (
1 Corinthians 5:1, 2; 6:9, 13,18; Genesis 37: 2; Ephesians 5:3-7; 2 Corinthians 7:12; Revelations 2:4; 3:19)

The people who are to be cautioned or disciplined in the church are those who have strayed or are about to stray from the convictions they once had. Sinners are not members of the church; hence, members of the church or the church cannot go about rebuking the world for failing to follow the steps of Christ. In our text, Paul says that there was a report regarding the church “... **that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife**” (1 Corinthians 5:1). This report showed that some of the church members who were still professing to be Christians were committing sin. They were destroying the testimony of the church by the life which they lived.

Question 2: *Why did Paul talk about the sins committed by these people openly?*

Paul needed to expose the people who were involved in sin to be able to separate the tare from the wheat and also create room for them to become remorseful and repent. “**Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear**” (1 Timothy 5:20). Corrective church discipline should only be targeted at those who have done things which are wrong and would destroy the fiber of the church. People are not to be disciplined for non-scriptural reasons or for being out of favor with the leadership of the fellowships and

churches. God frowns when members of His church are unjustly condemned and negatively criticized. Discipline is also not to become the main focus of the church where everyone is involved in looking out for errors in the lives of others. It affects the love and fellowship in the church. Paul spoke about this openly because it was a common knowledge. In cases where a very influential member of the church also goes into sin or error, it may be important to expose it to ensure people who look up to that individual as a role model do not hear about it later and try to copy the lifestyle of that leader or individual.

Church discipline can be for general purposes like disorderly conduct (conduct that is not in line with the prescribed commands of the Scripture and which negatively affects the testimony and unity of the church), and for specific causes such as crisis and disagreements between members (Matthew 18:15-17); segregation or factionalization and divisions in the church (Titus 3:9- 11); immoral act and conduct. Sins, as mentioned in our text such as incest, immorality, covetousness, idolatry, abusive speech, drunkenness, swindling, or idleness of busybodies who refuse to work but run around spreading dissension (2 Thessalonians 3:10-15); false doctrines either in teaching or in spread of literature (1 Timothy 1:20; 2 Timothy 2:17-18).

“And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you” (1 Corinthians 5:2). Where church discipline is not promptly and properly done, it leads to increased boldness of the backsliders until they destroy the bond in the church. This is why Jesus Christ said **“Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols”** (Revelation 2:20). Sinners and backsliders should be corrected quickly to help them repent. The most important thing in our fellowship, churches and Christian gatherings is the salvation of souls and the inheritance of eternal life. Anyone who is falling

short of this need to be brought back to track to ensure they do not miss heaven.

PATTERN OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE (1 Corinthians 5:3-8; Matthew 18:15-17; Proverbs 24:24, 25; 27:5; 1 Thessalonians 5:14, 15; 1 Timothy 5:1, 2)

“For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed” (1 Corinthians 5:3). The case in our text is an extreme case of indiscipline that was commonly reported and practiced within that church. The Corinthian church was situated within the regions where sin was practiced in very disgraceful manner and the church which was supposed to be the place where holiness was preached and practiced had also become an extension of the world. The individual was to be punished. Hence, he decreed that **“In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus”** (1 Corinthians 5:4-5). Such a drastic action was needed to stop a dreadful activity within the church. Paul handed them over to Satan for the destruction of their flesh to see if they would turn to Christ during this process and have their souls saved.

Question 3: *What should be the major considerations while disciplining an offender in the church?*

The key considerations that should guide the church during a time of discipline is not the destruction of the people involved or the public shame that gets associated with such activities, but (a) the holy character of God, (b) the testimony of the flock, (c) the effect upon the unity and purity of the flock, and (d) the edification and restoration of the person or group concerned. Hence, discipline must be done by those who are spiritual, truly walking by the Holy Spirit and growing in the Lord (Galatians 6:1). It must be done in a spirit of humility, gentleness and patience (2 Timothy 2:24, 25). It should be done without any form of partiality (1 Timothy 5:21). All activities relating to discipline should be done in love (Ephesians 4:15).

If after correcting someone there is no remorse, then the sinning believer is to be rebuked publicly and members of the body of Christ are to withdraw intimate fellowship from the person as seen in our text. This will show the offender that his action has dishonored the Lord. It is also to show other members of the church that God does not want them to get involved in such sin. If the offender refuses to change, in extreme cases, he is excommunicated as directed in Matthew 18:17

“And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican”.

PURPOSE OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE (1 Corinthians 5: 9-13; Matthew 18:15; James 5:20)

“But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no not to eat” (1 Corinthians 5:11). Paul, in explaining the purpose of church discipline to the church in Corinth said it is strange and an anomaly for someone who is called a brother to be involved in fornication, covetousness, idolatry or any form of sin. Having anyone who professes Christ getting involved in all these dishonors the body of Christ. Hence, believers are to steer clear of such people.

Question 4: *What is the purpose of Church discipline?*

The purpose of Church discipline is to achieve the following in the church of Christ.

- (1) To glorify the Lord and ensure the testimony of the Church remains intact.
- (2) To restore and heal backsliders (Matthew 18:15; 2 Thessalonians 3:14, 15; Hebrews 12:10-13).
- (3) To produce a vibrant and viable church, sound in doctrine (Titus 1:13).
- (4) To win more souls to Christ.
- (5) To put away false doctrines, teachers and influence in the church (Titus 1:10, 11).

- (6) To set an example for the rest of the members of the body of Christ and promote godly fear (1 Timothy 5:20).
- (7) To protect the church against the destructive consequences that occur when churches fail to carry out church discipline.

“And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city”
(Revelation 22:12-14).

LESSON 609

WATER BAPTISM

Memory Verse: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15, 16)

TEXT: Matthew 3:1-17; Acts 8:26-40.

Water baptism is one of the cardinal doctrines of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is one of the ordinances instituted by the Lord and made compulsory for all believers, including Christian youths. A careful study of scriptures will reveal that water baptism is an inseparable component of the Great Commission. Obedience to the Great Commission of our Lord will not be complete without observance of the ordinance of water baptism. Christ clearly stated, “**Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost**” (Matthew 28:19). All genuine ministers of the gospel and true Disciples of Christ must, therefore, obey the Lord’s mandate in this regard as any contrary view or opinion will amount to disobeying the direct words and instructions of our Lord Jesus Christ.

MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF WATER BAPTISM: (Matthew 3:1-8; Acts 8:35-37; 2:37-41; Romans 6:3-5; Galatians 3:27).

“**And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?**” (Acts 8:36).

Question 1: *What is water baptism?*

Water baptism is a spiritual ordinance. It is a process by which a new convert to the Christian faith openly and publicly identifies with Christ’s death, burial and resurrection (Colossians 2:12, 13). By observing this scriptural ordinance, the believer unashamedly declares that he is now in Christ. It is an outward demonstration of what has taken place inwardly (Galatians 3:27).

The word 'baptize' is a Greek word from 'baptiso' which means to immerse, 'dip inside liquid'. This shows the proper form of baptism by immersion.

Question 2: *What is the significance of water baptism?*

Immersion in water signifies identification with the burial of Christ while rising out of the water signifies rising up with Christ in newness of life (Romans 6:3-5). In baptism, the believer shows by his faith that Christ died for his sins and rose again for his justification.

Moreover, a careful study of the Scripture shows that water baptism is ONE immersion and not THREE immersions. **"And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him"** (Matthew 3:16). In Matthew 3:13-16, both Christ and John the Baptist went into river Jordan where He was immersed ONCE. In Acts 8:38, 39, both Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch went into the water, where he was immersed ONCE.

THE MANDATE OF THE SAVIOUR ON WATER BAPTISM: (Matthew 3:15; Mark 16:15; Acts 8:35-39; 1 Corinthian 1:14-16)

"And Jesus answering said unto him, suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him". "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Matthew 3:15; Mark 16:16).

Question 3: *What should be the response of Christian youths towards the ordinance of water baptism?*

All truly converted youths should obey the Savior's mandate and submit themselves for water baptism. Refusal to be baptized after salvation experience will amount to deliberate disobedience to the word of God. Water baptism is to be done in accordance with the commandment of Jesus: **"... in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"** (Matthew 28:19).

Question 4: *Mention some erroneous practices of water baptism.*

The erroneous practices include (i) three immersions, (ii) sprinkling of water; (iii) making people to squat in water; (iv) infant baptism; (v) baptism of the dead; (vi) making the sign of the cross with water on the participant's face or pouring water on the participant; and (VI) baptizing in the name of Jesus only. The opinion of man should not contradict the stand of the scriptures. The practice of water baptism should be upheld today in the Church as it was in the early church. Converts were baptized in water as soon as they were saved (Acts 2:41; 8:37, 38; 16:30, 31, 33).

MARKS OF SALVATION BEFORE WATER BAPTISM: (Luke 24: 46, 47; Mark 16:15, 16; Matthew 3:5-8; Acts 8:36, 37; 2:41, 42; 8:5 8, 12)

Water baptism is not the same as salvation. It does not grant salvation or freedom from sin. Water baptism is a practical demonstration of the salvation already experienced. As a matter of fact, salvation is the condition for water baptism. This was why, in our text, John the Baptist demanded for clear-cut marks of salvation or repentance from the Jews that came to him to be baptized. **“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance”** (Matthew 3:7, 8). A sinning youth needs to repent of all known sins before water baptism can take place.

Question 5: *What is the danger of baptizing unsaved youths and infants?*

Baptizing youths who have not been truly converted is contrary to the Scripture and is not acceptable to God. Also, infant baptism is unscriptural because infants are innocent and have not practiced sin to be repented of. Therefore, they cannot be baptized in water. Water baptism follows a definite experience and assurance of salvation from sins.

After hearing the gospel and receiving Christ as Lord and personal Savior, with obvious marks and evident proofs of the new life, the converted youth is to present himself for scriptural water baptism. All unscriptural forms of water baptism previously done must be corrected henceforth

because **“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned”** (Mark 16:15). Jesus said, **“And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”** (Luke 6:46).

LESSON 610

QUIET TIME AND FAMILY DEVOTION

Memory Verse: “*And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed*” (Mark 1:35).

TEXT: Genesis 19:27-29; 28:18-22; Exodus 34:2-10

Air is essential to life. Every living thing requires it. This is the reason God supplies it in abundance for everyone freely. In the same vein, for a Christian youth to survive spiritually, he needs daily prayer and reading of the Word of God. The newly saved believer need to develop a regular “observance” of a time of prayer and reading the Word of God for growth and personal spiritual upkeep (1 Peter 2:2). Also, the need to observe such a time with other members of the family cannot be over-emphasized.

Question 1: *What is Quiet Time?*

“**O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is**” (Psalm 63:1). The time of personal study of the word of God and prayer is referred to as Quiet Time. The issue of quiet time and family devotion today must be taken seriously by every Christian youth and family who want to maintain a victorious Christian life in this evil world and also function effectively in their service to God.

THE PRIORITY, PLACE AND TIME OF QUIET TIME:
(Genesis 19:27; 28:18-22; Exodus 34:2; Jeremiah 33:3; Psalm 5:3; 63:1-7; 55:16,17; Mark 1:35).

“**My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up**” (Psalm 5:3).

Question 2: *Give reasons Christian youths need to observe Quiet Time.*

The need for the practice of individual quiet time cannot be over-emphasized. Firstly, God wants youth to be in

fellowship with Him. As a loving Father, He wants to have communion with His children on daily basis so as to reveal more of Himself to them and also direct their path. Sin made man to lose this privilege but Christ came to restore it (John 10:10). God calls us to meet with Him every day. We should, in reciprocal gratitude, respond positively and not be like the children of Israel of whom He said, **“I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me”** (Jeremiah 35:14).

Secondly, regular study of God’s Word and communion with Him in prayer enhances rapid Christian stability and growth (1 Peter 2:2). A Christian cannot grow spiritually without spiritual food as he cannot grow physically without physical food. Like a garden of flowers, friendship with God needs careful cultivation and this demands consistency. We must maintain a continuous link with God through personal devotional prayer.

Question 3: (a) What should characterize the venue for individual quiet time? (b) Why is the morning and evening time best for personal devotion?

When and where should a believer observe his quiet time? A thorough study of the scriptures show that personal devotions are best done early in the morning and late in the evening before going to bed. This means we should observe our fellowship with the Lord daily. In Exodus 16:21, manna was gathered every morning and our ‘manna’ today is **“every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God”** (Matthew 4:4). The Levites (Old Testament type of New Testament believers) offered a daily sacrifice. David performed his vows and cried to God on daily basis (Psalm 86:3). Paul prayed and was renewed in the inner man daily (2 Timothy 1:3; 2 Corinthians 4:16) and the Berean Christians searched the scriptures daily in their time (Acts 17:11). The examples of our Lord Jesus Christ (Mark 1:35), David (Psalm 55:17) and Daniel (Daniel 6:10) together with that of numerous Christians down the ages teach us the necessity of starting the day with God because the mind is always fresh in the morning. Rising early helps immeasurably in getting the best from the study of God’s Word and prayer (Genesis 28:18; Exodus

29:39,42; 30:7; Psalm 5:3; 59:16; 63:1). Also, to have the best from this gracious exercise, one needs a place that is free from distraction and characterized by seclusion and quietness. We get all these from our present places of abode by rising early to read, meditate on the Word of God and then pray fervently. The disciples were with Christ, yet **“he was alone praying”** (Luke 9:18). We can shut off the distraction of people, events and things to concentrate on prayer and study of God’s Word.

THE PLACE OF GOD’S WORD AND PRAYER DURING QUIET TIME (Luke 4:4; Job 23:12; Colossians 3:16; Daniel 6:10; Psalm 55:17; Matthew 14:23; Mark 6:46; Luke 6:12).

In order to benefit maximally from personal Bible study, we need to know the purpose and focus of the Holy Bible. Though a revelation of God, and containing more information about man’s past, present and future than any other book, its design is to show man the salvation of God, obtainable through Christ Jesus (Psalm 27:1a; John 20:31; 2 Timothy 3:15; Acts 20:32). The Bible has a practical purpose of guiding us into the experience of salvation and spiritual maturity. Since salvation is exclusively through Christ, the focus of the entire Bible is centered on the Savior (John 5: 39, 46; Luke 24: 25 -27, 44). Better understanding of Christ is attained as we study the Word “day by day”. For times of meditative study of the divine Book, our prayer should be: **“Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. I am a stranger in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me”** (Psalm 119:18, 19).

Question 4: *With what attitude should we study the Bible?*

To understand God’s revelation in the scriptures, we must come with open minds, surrendered wills, and faith in God. It is wisdom for the ignorant to acknowledge his situation before God and only such will be made wiser (Luke 10:21). Individuals who are wise “in their own conceits” languish in continued blindness and spiritual impoverishment (John 9:41). Then, we must approach God’s Word with a willingness to comply with whatever he is asking us to do. We must, like Christ, be willing to say, **“Not my will but thine be done”** and in this is the proof of our love for

Him (John 14:21). Also, those parts we cannot, with the intellect, comprehend, we must, with faith, believe. We must deliberately choose to believe the Word as we read it, accounting that God is faithful to all His promises. We must commence the walk of faith and grow in the same by hearing and reading the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

We should constantly study the Bible with the aim of having our lives transformed into the likeness of Christ (John 8:31; 2 Corinthians 3:18). We should be primarily pre-occupied with what God has to say to us. Helpful questions while studying the Bible should include: what does the passage say? What does it mean? And how does it apply to me? We should not seek far-fetched interpretations for simple, easily comprehensible passages. We should be careful not to constantly search the scriptures during our quiet time for sermons to preach to others; rather, for personal application. We must seek out from the passage, examples to follow, commands to obey, errors to avoid, imperfections to forsake and promises to claim. Other aids to fruitful study include the use of helpful books such as balanced commentaries, Bible atlas and concordance. It also helps to keep records of lessons in notebooks and memorize scriptures on regular basis. Character, books and topical studies have their places and advantages but in all, we must seek to have God speak to us as individuals. In addition, we encourage every youth to have a copy of *Higher Every day* for their personal devotion.

Question 5: *What are the major activities that constitute a rich quiet time?*

Prayer and Bible study are the major activities during quiet time. For our Bible study to be meaningful and effective, our prayer should be conditioned and molded by God's self-revelation in the Bible. God has taken the first step in reconciling man to Himself. Man needs to reciprocate this love of God (1 John 4:19). Approaching the throne of the King of kings is a privilege specially reserved for God's children by virtue of Christ's death on the cross. God's manifold blessings upon sinners are for the purpose of drawing them to repentance (Romans 2:4). We pray also because we love God. Prayer is one of our offensive

weapons against the enemy. It is the believer's spiritual breath. We "pray in" what we have gained from the Word of God, expressing our response to what He has said to us. Daily prayer should include the following: worship, thanksgiving, intercession, supplication and commitment. We worship and adore the Lord for Who He is.

We should express our gratitude for all God's past mercies received even when we still have some that are yet to be met (Luke 17:12-19; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; Romans 8:28). We should confess our frailties and imperfections to Him and solicit for His enabling grace. We should also pray earnestly for other people and present their needs to God as Abraham did for Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:23-33), Jesus for us (John 17:9, 11) and Epaphras for the Colossians (Colossians 4:12). Then, we should supplicate for our personal needs, great and small. Finally, we should commit all our activities for the day to Him, asking Him to be "Lord of all". This is the secret of joy in His presence every day.

THE PURPOSE AND PARTICIPATION DURING FAMILY DEVOTION (Genesis 18:19; 2 Timothy 1:5)

Every youth should know that it is the responsibility of their parents to lead the entire family in the way of righteousness. Abraham did and had God's commendation (Genesis 18:19), Samuel's mother did and raised one of the greatest prophets. Hezekiah led the whole city of Jerusalem to seek the Lord in his time (2 Chronicles 29:20).

Question 6: *Why is family devotion essential in every Christian home?*

To accomplish God's purpose for the family, there is a need to worship, study and pray together. The father, as the spiritual head of the home (Ephesians 5:23) takes the lead. A regular time of family altar is ensured when the members have time to sing songs/choruses of worship.

The father (or his appointed representative) leads by reading and explaining scriptural passages. Time is given for heart-lifting prayer of praises, intercession, supplication and commitment. This is preferably fixed before the activities of the day are embarked upon. The family may

prefer to have their individual Quiet Time before waking the other family members for corporate worship or choose to have it after. It is also helpful for the family to pray together before going to bed. All these will help the spiritual growth of the young family members and their understanding of scriptural truths.

If we must become youths who have authority from God in heaven, then, we cannot do without patterning our lives according to all that we have learnt today with respect to communion with God.

LESSON 611

GROWTH WITH UNITY

Memory Verse: “*Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*” (Ephesians 4:3).

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

The focus of the Apostle in our text is the Church, the body of Christ. The Church here is not a building, an organization, a club, society, community of people with common interest or a system. It is basically an assembly of people who, individually, are born again and thus have the life of Christ in them. There is a universal church, the assembly or collection of all blood-washed souls all over the world. They are called the assembly or the Church of the first born, the redeemed of the Lord, saints in Christ, disciples or followers of Christ. This is the invisible Church. Besides, there is the visible body of Christ that comes together for worship, fellowship and study of the Word of God. This is the local church.

THE MANIFOLD NEEDS OF A GROWING CHURCH (Acts 1:6; 2:37-47; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18).

“Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied” (Acts 9:31).

Question 1: Give reasons why the visible church must grow.

The visible church, in God’s economy, is designed to grow and keep together in unity. Having sent the Lord to shed His blood for the redemption of all, He desires that no one will perish but that all would come to repentance. If that desire is fulfilled, the church will grow. Christ Himself said: **“For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved”** (John 3:17).

The Spirit of God is always working towards the growth of the Church. **“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.**

And let him that heareth say, Come. And whosoever will let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17). If all those on whom the Holy Ghost beckons to come all over the world respond, the Church will surely grow. If the Church universal is to grow, every local church will have to grow.

The leadership of the visible church also desires to see the church grow. This is because workers, preachers, teachers and ministers in the church have the mind of Christ which is the growth of the church. Second, since the workers are servants of God and God wants His church to grow, then, the servants have the same burning desire. Also, the indwelling Spirit in every minister eagerly looks forward to the growth of the church and so is the minister himself driven by the same persuasion of the Spirit who indwells him. So, in uniformity and conformity to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the leadership will also want the Church to grow.

The Bible gives several pictures of the Christian worker and likens him to some common vocation so as to effectively communicate the expectation of heaven. Workers in the kingdom are likened to fishermen. **“And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men”** (Matthew 4:19). And just as every fisherman wants his net to be full of fishes, so should every leader and worker desire his spiritual net, the local church, to grow and be full of people.

Leaders in the church are likened to wise master builders and to husbandmen who take care of the vineyard of the Lord. In the natural sense, farmers want their vineyard to bear much fruit. So also, spiritual leaders in the church must bear much fruit and make the church to grow. The Lord said: **“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples”** (John 15:2, 5, 8). Again, the leaders in the church are also

called shepherds (Acts 20:28). Certainly, all shepherds want their flock to increase. And if we are true spiritual shepherds with the heart and mind of Christ, we will want the church to grow.

Men show concern when their families do not grow - total, holistic family growth. The church is also a family. Christ, the Head of the family wants the church to grow. Again, the church is likened to a nation. **“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praise of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light”** (1 Peter 2:9). In the natural sense, president, governors, senators and other officers of the nation endeavor to strengthen the nation so that there will be growth in all the various areas of national life. In the same vein, church leaders who are the equivalents of president, governors and other leaders in the nation, must not only desire but also work hard so that the church will grow numerically and spiritually.

Question 2: *What are the needs of a local Church?*

A local church in her hundreds or thousands has a congregation whose needs are varied. The different social and educational background of her members would require different approaches in meeting their needs spiritually and materially. But with the various needs, the church must still be kept united.

Question 3: *What are the factors that enhance the growth and unity of the church?*

There will be unity when every member of the body sees the necessity and the responsibility that lies on him or her to keep the church united. To sit on an armchair, and opine that the work of the unity of the church is strictly the business of the Holy Spirit is to sound simplistic. It does not work that way. A small nuclear family of five or six still have to endeavor to make the family united, not to talk of hundreds, thousands or tens of thousands of people.

If the church must grow and be united, every member, worker and minister must see that the church is unique in outreach, ministry and mission to the body of Christ in

particular and the world in general. If this basic truth is glossed over, you are not likely to remain in the body or work for her unity. You will, in the style of a butterfly, nose every nectar in every flower. This will be done at the cost of growth and unity.

If the church must grow and be united, you must have a sense of belonging. This makes for commitment to the doctrine, life, relationship and unity of the church. A sense of belonging gives you a deep desire, or unending longing to always be with other members of the church in fellowship. Real, genuine sense of belonging gives an attachment (spiritually, mentally, emotionally) of loyalty, fellow feeling, and an integration with the church. A sense of belonging makes you feel incomplete and unsatisfied when you are inevitably missing from the church or cut off from fellowship with other members by reason of a journey or relocation.

Again, a sense of belonging will drive or compel you to seize every opportunity to be involved in the ministry and mission of the church. Those who stay aloof cannot have a sense of belonging. Those who pop in to lick the sweet nectar of the word of God with a detached noncommittal stance do not have a sense of belonging and they cannot work for the growth and unity of the church. Therefore, for the unity of the church, every member needs to participate, contribute to the advancement of the church and must also realize that his contribution is required, recognized, appreciated and needed.

MEMBERS' ROLE IN CHURCH UNITY (1 Corinthians 12:21-27; Acts 2:44; John 17:17, 21; 1 Peter 1:22; 3:8-10; 1 John 3:16).

“For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another” (1 Corinthians 12:24, 25).

Question 4: *In what ways can the members help in the unity of the church?*

The members of the church have the duty to ensure they are *genuinely saved*. They must also be *sanctified*. This second definite work of grace does a lot within the heart of the believer. It fills his heart with love and brings him into unity with the body of Christ. The sanctified heart hates anything that divides the church and fellowship of the brethren. He cannot criticize others, gossip, or backbite. He has a natural inclination to keep the unity of the body of Christ as it ought to be. He is committed to continue in the saints' fellowship with a strong desire to be part of the body of Christ. He is enthusiastic about his membership with the family of God and he cannot tradeoff that privilege with anything.

Furthermore, the true member of the church wants to love and forgive. He recognizes the possibility of offences, (perhaps inadvertently or even advertently), but he commits himself to the principle of Christian forgiveness and non-retaliation. This brings about unity in the church. But when grudges, malice, ill-feeling are the order of the day, there will be no unity. If members in the small group or Youth Fellowship will not forgive, love and overlook offences, there will be no unity in that Youth Fellowship or in the whole assembly.

Again, all members who want to work for and enhance unity in the church recognize that there are minor differences which are best described as non-essentials. We must not allow such non-essential differences to affect our love and relationship. There must also be humility among members if we must keep being united. Where pride of possession, family background, natural endowment or educational attainments – comes in, it will not be possible to be united. But if in honor we prefer one another, appreciate one another and recognize the contributions of other people more than ours, then there will be unity in the church.

Question 5: *What is the member's duty to the leadership of the church?*

Every member needs to realize the blessedness of respect and obedience to leadership. This singular virtue, when it is in all the members of the church, makes the church united. When all the workers and members of the church

duly respect and obey leadership, the devil will be shut out of the life of the church and all of us would speak, act and minister in cooperation, not in competition with other people. This is the ideal of the church. This is the model. This is the Bible standard. And this is what we must be. **“From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love”** (Ephesians 4:16).

THE MINISTER’S ROLE IN CHURCH UNITY (1 Corinthians 12:28, 29; Ephesians 4:11, 12; Romans 14:19).

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11, 12).

Question 6: *How can the ministers work for the unity of the church?*

If the church must be united, the ministry of the ministers in the church must be edifying and challenging. It must be able to move the church forward. All those who minister in word and doctrine, in prayer and faith, in music and orderliness, must do it in love and charity and build up the church thereby. At the Youth Fellowship, everything must be done in love and faith. These ministers and their ministries in the church “must also be positive and Christ-like in lifestyle so that unity will be promoted.

In addition, to make for unity, our ministries must be complementary, not contentious. In other words, our service must have the elements that make the total ministry of the church complete. Our service must be supplying something to the total life and ministry of the church. In this vein, every believer must shun criticism, complaint, quarrel or every divisive tendencies. Leaders or local pastors will not compete one with another or contradict one another. A section of the church must not seek to outshine the other. Rather, they should complement one another. This should exclude pride, contention and competition. It demands that all members and workers will pray for every area of

the work even when they are not involved in those areas. Besides, it implies that workers will desire the growth and development of the other areas of the work just as they desire the growth of the areas they are involved in too.

A pastor who wants to work for the unity of the church should not emphasize an area of the work while he de-emphasizes another area. All the workers must be equally appreciated and recognized. Youth ministry must not be exalted while regular adult ministries are eclipsed. Again, the youth must not be swallowed up by the adult ministries in the church. The women ministry also must enjoy as much attention and recognition in the church just as the men's. Ethnicism, tribalism, partiality and favoritism must be kept out of the church lest the unity be threatened. The pastor's heart needs to be broadened to accommodate all people from all walks of life. Besides, to ensure unity in the church, there must be harmony of all the various units of the church life. When there is harmony among leaders, there will be unity in the church.

Again, there must be constant motivation to identify with the central mission; and there must be commitment to the same goal. If personal, petty, selfish interest superimposes itself over the central, larger goal, our unity will be threatened. Ministers in the church must also manifest love, forgiveness, compassion and purity of life to enhance unity and growth in the church. The Scripture says: **“For we are laborers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building”** (1 Corinthians 3:9). Therefore, let us build according to Bible standard.

LESSON 612

GOD PROVES ISRAEL

Memory Verse: *“Now these are the nations which the LORD left, to prove Israel by them, even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan” (Judges 3:1).*

TEXT: Judges 3: 1-31

The children of Israel had been fallen and rising since the demise of Joshua and all the elders that outlived him. The Lord had been kind to them, sending them deliverers as soon as they cried to Him. Unfortunately, there was no improvement in their lifestyles. Thus, the Lord resolved not to drive out all their enemies at once that He might prove them.

In this study, we want to see in clear terms what God meant when He said He would prove them. We also want to see their responses to this move and the consequences of such. Besides, there are numerous lessons to learn from the character of Ehud, one of the judges we shall be considering today.

GOD’S REASONS FOR OUR CHALLENGES (Judges 3:1-8; Deuteronomy 7:1-6; 8:2, 3; 1Kings 11:1-8; 2 Corinthians 12:7; Hebrews 12:9-11; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6, 7)

“Now these are the nations which the LORD left, to prove Israel by them, even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan” (verse 1). Here the Bible says that God wanted **“to prove Israel”**. This category of the Israelites were those that **“had not known all the wars of Canaan”**. They were those who **“before knew nothing”**. God saw their ignorance, limitations, lack of skills and backslidden tendencies before He decided He was going to prove them (verse 2). The first is that they **“might know, to teach them war”**. It is to impart knowledge of war in them. Through various wars, they would have gathered experience to handle life battles that should come afterwards. The second meaning is **“to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments**

of the LORD” (verse 4). The challenge to live with the heathen will expose their true nature - obedience or disobedience. **“I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died: That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not”** (Judges 2:21, 22). This is sometimes the reason for the challenges that the Lord allows us to go through.

Question 1: Why does God allow His people to have challenges?

“Only that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof... And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the LORD, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses” (verses 2, 4). The clause, **“to prove Israel”**, had two meanings which are very clear in this passage.

Looking through the Scripture, we will find out that the reasons God allows us to go through challenges are: to check up on our spiritual character, quality and strength; to drill, equip and prepare us for a better life, and also to prove His power over life’s situation (Deuteronomy 8:2 Psalm 136:10-26).

GREAT REGRET FOR COMPROMISE (Judges 3:8-11; Psalms 34:17; 107:17-19; Philippians 4:6; Isaiah 11:2; Acts 10:38; 13:2-4, 25-27; 1 John 2:20, 27; Joshua 1:8)

“Therefore the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Chushanrishathaim king of Mesopotamia: and the children of Israel served Chushanrishathaim eight years” (verse 8). God was very angry with the children of Israel because they had compromised His standard of relationship. They had married people He forbade them from marrying. Therefore, He sold them out to serve one of their enemies. They regretted what they did and cried to the Lord. **“And when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who**

delivered them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother" (verse 9).

Question 2: *What lessons can we learn from the compromise and the cry of the children of Israel?*

Compromise is not good because it denies one the opportunity to get closer to God. It makes one to incur God's wrath. It brings oppression and calamities into the life of the compromisers. Finally, it prevents one from entering into heaven (James 4:4; Revelation 22:18, 19). Despite their compromise, when they called to the Lord, He answered them. When a compromiser or a sinner realizes his/her sins and calls upon God in the time of afflictions, He would forgive their sins and deliver them out of troubles (2 Chronicles 7:14). How much more then would God hear the cry of the righteous and deliver them out of all their troubles? (Psalm 50:15).

"And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war: and the LORD delivered Chushanrishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed against Chushanrishathaim" (verse 10).

Question 3: *What are the secrets of successful leadership?*

When God chose Othniel as a judge over Israel, He filled him with His Spirit (verse 10). It was due to that unction and anointing that he was able to judge Israel. Besides, the Lord gave him victory over their captor and oppressor, "**Chushanrishathaim king of Mesopotamia**". The secret of true success in leadership is to allow the Spirit of God to anoint us for the work. The anointing will enable us achieve great success in ministry. Moreover, we need to adhere to the standard of the word of God. "**This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success**" (Joshua 1:8). A leader who wants to succeed must ensure that he leads and governs the people by the word of the Lord. The result of such leadership is peace. "**And the land had rest forty**

years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died” (verse 11).

GODLY REFLECTION ON EHUD’S CHARACTER (Judges 3:12-31; Ecclesiastes 4:8-12; 2 Kings 10:18-25; Joshua 2:2-7; Matthew 13:25)

“And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD. And he ...went and smote Israel, and possessed the city of palm trees. So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years” (verses 12-14).

Question 4: What is God’s standard about eternal security?

When the children of Israel went back into sin, God took them through the same route of servitude. They lost their city of palm trees and freedom. Sin brings one into bondage. We should note that, if God has forgiven our sins, we can only enjoy His favor as long as we stay in righteousness. If we turn back, the Lord will not be happy with us (Hebrews 10:26-29, 38, 39).

“But when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera... But Ehud made him a dagger which had two edges, of a cubit length; and he did gird it under his raiment upon his right thigh. And he brought the present unto Eglon ...” (verses 15-18). As usual, they called on the Lord again and He heard them and sent a deliverer. God is merciful to all sinners who would call upon Him. There is need to be watchful as we collect gifts from people. (2 Samuel 20:9, 10). The king allowed himself to be left alone with Ehud which made his murder possible (verse 19-23). **“...be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. “Lest strangers be filled with thy wealth; and thy labors be in the house of a stranger”** (Matthew 10:16; Proverbs 5:10).

As a Christian youth, you should not attend to strangers alone in a hidden place. Do not follow your mates to some secret places which they do not want you to disclose to your parents.

Besides, Ehud told a lie to achieve his God-given mission. But we are not to follow his example. We can accomplish all that God wants us to accomplish without telling lies.

Question 5: *What were the mistakes of Eglon's servants?*

“When he was gone out, his servants came; and when they saw that, behold, the doors of the parlor were locked, they said, surely he covereth his feet in his summer chamber” (verse 24).

These servants made two costly mistakes that many youths still make today. It was the mistake of assumption without verifying the facts and sitting back doing nothing when something necessary should be done. We should not just assume that something we imagine is true until we have verified it (1Thessalonians 5:21). We should be diligent, watchful and take action when necessary. These men acted rather too late. **“And they tarried till they were ashamed: and, behold, he opened not the doors of the parlor; therefore they took a key, and opened them: and, behold, their lord was fallen down dead on the earth. And Ehud escaped while they tarried...”**

The next thing they saw was battle which they were neither prepared for nor had a captain to lead. Thus, they were all defeated (verses 27-31). As we end today's lesson, it is necessary for all Christian youths to be watchful over their Christian lives and be consistent in prayer. **“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you”** (1 Peter 5:7-10).

LESSON 613

EXPLOITS OF DEBORAH AND BARAK

Memory Verse: “And Deborah said unto Barak, up; for this is the day in which the LORD hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the LORD gone out before thee? So Barak went down from mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him” (Judges 4:14).

TEXT: Judges 4:1-24

The darker the night, the more the stars shine. The history of the children of Israel had come to the darkest moment due to sin. The Lord Himself delivered them to the enemies to oppress them. Although God had already revealed to them the consequences of any form of backsliding through Moses, His servant, they did not take heed to God’s warning. **“But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee: ... The LORD shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them: and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth” (Deuteronomy 28:15, 25).**

However, as the children of Israel cried to God in their servitude, He raised up Deborah, the prophetess, and Barak to deliver them. Furthermore, God also used Jael to bring the defeat of a noble captain called Sisera. Most times, God uses unrecognized tools to accomplish great things for His glory. **“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are**

despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence” (1 Corinthians 1:26-29). Jesus Christ, the Beloved of the Father, is the great Savior. Therefore, acknowledge, trust and depend fully on Him (Proverbs 3:5, 6).

CONSEQUENCES OF PERPETUAL BACKSLIDING
(Judges 4:1-3; Jeremiah 8:5; Genesis 19:26; Hebrews 2:1-3; 10:31; Psalm 78:5-12,35-45,56-59)

The children of Israel enjoyed a long period of rest and peace for eighty years under Judge Ehud. The long period of peace was enough for the people to have manifested total devotion to God. But it was not so. Perhaps, the period of rest, prosperity and peace bred indulgence. This led to immediate national backsliding and apostasy after the death of Ehud.

From the book of Judges alone, the children of Israel had turned from the Lord into sin several times (Judges 2:11; 3; 7, 12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1). This is referred to as perpetual backsliding. Here is the declaration of God concerning them later. **“Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast deceit, they refuse to return”** (Jeremiah 8:5).

Question 1a: *What is backsliding? (b) What are the consequences of it?*

“And the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host was Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles” (verse 2). Backsliding is turning away from the Lord after knowing Him. It is refusing to obey Him always and do His commands. In our text, the Lord delivered the Israelites into the hand of Jabin, the king of Canaan and Sisera was the captain of the army. These enemies mightily oppressed the children of Israel for twenty years (verse 3). This servitude was of a different nature. It was the worst servitude Israel ever had. It was longer than any of the other servitude to Mesopotamia, Moab or Philistines. The oppression must have been serious. Sin has great consequences. Beware!

Question 2: How can one know that backsliding has or is about to set in?

“The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself” (Proverbs 14:14). The character of a fallen or backslidden disciple shows that he is no more maintaining a steady, stable walk with God. There is no desire to cleave to the Lord. The steps that lead to backsliding include: (1) inability to resist temptation in the area of peculiar weakness; (2) committing and covering up sin; (3) rejecting and neglecting warnings from the Spirit, Scripture and the servants of God; (4) deliberately and consistently hardening ones heart against the truth; and (5) friendship with the enemies of Christ.

“And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD...” (Verse 3). The children of Israel cried to God for deliverance at last. The only way out of sin or backsliding is to return to God in repentance. **“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land”** (2 Chronicles 7:14).

THE CALL OF PROPHETESS DEBORAH AND BARAK: (Judges 4:4-10; Acts 21:8, 9; 2 Kings 6:1-6; Hosea 12:13; Micah 6:4)

“And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time” (verse 4). The principal figure used in the deliverance of Israel from the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan and his captain, Sisera, was Deborah, the prophetess. Before the year of deliverance, she had been a judge in Israel. Her prophetic gifts and authority were recognized. This paved way for the deliverance ministry God was going to use her for. The captains of soldiers respected her ministry. She exercised judicial power as well as gave spiritual influences that touched the national life. Inspired by the Spirit of God, she rose above the limitations of her gender and was determined to break the yoke of nine hundred chariots of iron which pressed upon the neck of Israel.

Question 3: *What kind of influence did Deborah have in Israel?*

The moral power and influence which this prophetess had in Israel and her special position in the affairs of Israel accounted for the prompt obedience Barak gave her. Furthermore, Barak's insistence on Deborah going with him to the battle shows the presence of God in her. Today, the Lord needs youths with the power of the Spirit of God to reach our schools with the gospel of Christ. **"But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin"** (Micah 3:8). Let all saved youths in our fellowship take time to wait on the Lord for power to preach the gospel effectively.

"And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedeshnaphtali, and said unto him, hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, saying, Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun? And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand" (verses 6, 7). While Deborah was not trained to raise and command an army, she committed the work to Barak. Therefore, by divine direction, Deborah instructed Barak who raised ten thousand armies for the battle. Today, God is in need of prophets, preachers, teachers and evangelists to take the word of Christ to the dark world and bring the light of the gospel to those living in the shadow of death. Be a soul winner in your school and community.

THE CONQUERING OF SISERA BY DIVINE ARRANGEMENT: (Judges 4:12-24; Hebrews 11:32-34; Acts 13:1-5)

When Sisera heard of Israel's preparation for war, he gathered all his nine hundred chariots of iron together and came to river Kishon. Deborah immediately told Barak to rise **"Up; for this is the day in which the LORD hath delivered Sisera into thine hand"** (verse 14). So Barak went forth against Sisera and the Lord discomfited them before Israel. However, Sisera attempted to escape but

was killed by a woman. In his flight, he got into the hands of a Kenitish woman, Jael. She feigned hospitality and provided a bed for him to rest. But it turned out to be where he was killed. Thus, God subdued the Canaanites and delivered Israel from twenty years servitude to Canaan.

Question 4: *What factors accounted for the victory of Israel over the Canaanites?*

“And the LORD discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his host, with the edge of the sword before Barak; so that Sisera lighted down off his chariot, and fled away on his feet” (verse 15). We must be quick to point out that the victory of Barak over Sisera at Kishon was not wrought through arms, prowess or strategies of men. The victory was wrought by the Lord Himself. The armies of the two nations are contrast in respect of numbers, resources, strategic position and skilled leadership. In all respect, the army of Sisera had advantages over Barak and his ten thousand soldiers. Israel was a dispossessed, corrupted, humiliated and weakened nation. Canaan was renowned for her chariots of iron. However, God proved in this battle that **“the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds”** (2 Corinthians 10:4). In the contest of life’s battle today, the Christian youth needs to know that **“greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world”** (1 John 4:4). Our spiritual strength is more relevant in fighting life’s battles than physical resources. Besides, Barak depended on God for the victory. The promises of God are still powerful to secure us from the boasting of the enemies.

Question 5: *What do we learn about co-operation in ministry from the relationship between Deborah and Barak?*

The complementary ministry of Deborah and Barak is instructive. Deborah cannot lead an army but can inspire. On the other hand, Barak cannot prophesy but he can fight. Yet, Barak may not be able to secure victory without Deborah. The body of Christ must remember this always. All those who are part of the body of Christ must work together to build it up. Members should have care one for

another (1 Corinthians 12:24-26). In Bible day, this was very common. Moses complemented Joshua's effort in battle (Exodus 17:8-13). Elisha complemented the effort of the army of Israel in their fight against Syria (2 Kings 6:8-12). Therefore, to have progress, victory and do exploits, we need the co-operation of the various gifts and ministries in the Church.

LESSON 614

DEBORAH AND BARAK'S SONG OF VICTORY

Memory Verse: "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57).

TEXT: Judges 5:1-31

The partnership between Deborah and Barak for the service of God yielded great success. Through them God gave Israel great victory over a formidable enemy. After the victory, Deborah and Barak began to praise and worship the great God who gave them the victory. What a challenge! Earlier, Deborah had said that the honor of the battle will not go to Barak. **"And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honor; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh"** (Judges 4:9). As a Christian youth, we should learn to partner with one another in spiritual and academic matters in order to achieve great success for the glory of God.

PURPOSE OF SPIRITUAL SONGS (Judges 5:1-3; Exodus 15:1-21; Psalm 106:1-5, 10-12; 2 Chronicles 20:21, 22; Acts 16:25-27; Colossians 3:16)

"Praise ye the LORD for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves" (verse 2). The purpose of singing spiritual songs is to honor and glorify God for His goodness to His people. Therefore, we should give all the glory and honor to Him alone. In many fellowships around us, we may see or hear different kinds of music and songs that do not honor God. Worldly music or songs are not to be rendered to God or in His house. Therefore, we should not copy them in our fellowship, where God's presence and glory is.

Question 1: *What are the qualities of spiritual songs that are acceptable to God?*

“Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?” (Exodus 15:11). The qualities of a good spiritual song acceptable to God include: (1) The people rendering the song must know Him experientially (Exodus 15:1, 2); (2) the songs should express the greatness of God (Exodus 15:3-7); (3) the singers must live a holy life and the song should reflect God’s holiness (Exodus 15:11). (4) The words of the song should have scriptural content (Exodus 15:13). The singers must be orderly in their presentation (Exodus 15:20; 1 Corinthians 14:40).

Question 2: Name people who rendered acceptable spiritual songs to the Lord in Bible days.

The Bible is full of people who rendered acceptable spiritual songs to the Lord in both the Old and New Testaments. Some of them were Moses, Miriam, Deborah, Barak, David, Paul, Silas, the Disciples of Christ and Christ, our perfect example. Who will be the next to render acceptable spiritual songs to the Lord today?

“Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes; I, even I, will sing unto the LORD; I will sing praise to the LORD God of Israel” (verse 3). Every child of God should participate in worshipping God through songs. Deborah and Barak, though prophetess and captain respectively, humbled themselves and participated in singing to the Lord. There are great manifestations of God’s power and presence when we praise God in the beauty of holiness.

The people in Bible days enjoyed these benefits. Hence, we should learn to praise God with great expectation that He will manifest His power and presence in our fellowship. **“What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?”** (Psalms 116:12).

PARTNERSHIP FOR SUCCESSFUL SERVICE (Judges 5:4-23; Nehemiah 7:1, 2; 3:5, 20; 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2; 12:15-20)

“LORD, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water. The mountains melted from before the LORD,

even that Sinai from before the LORD God of Israel” (verses 4, 5). Deborah and Barak expressed and attributed their victory to the power of God. Also, they expressed how God gave them victory without weapons of war. **“They chose new gods; then was war in the gates: was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand Israel?”** (Verse 8).

Question 3: *What was the secret of Israel’s victory over the enemies?*

“Then he made him that remaineth have dominion over the nobles among the people: the LORD made me have dominion over the mighty” (verse 13). The secret of Israel’s victory was their faith in the ability of God to give them dominion over the enemies. The most powerful enemy can be conquered through the prayer of faith in God. He is the Man of war. He has never lost any battle. Hand over your life’s battle to Him and be rest assured that He will give you victory.

“My heart is toward the governors of Israel that offered themselves willingly among the people. Bless ye the LORD” (verse 9). Although their victory came from God, He used faithful leaders who gave their full support to Deborah. She recognized this fact and expressed thus: **“... the people willingly offered themselves. ... Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeopardies their lives unto the death in the high places of the field”** (verses 2, 18). These were faithful leaders who rendered quality support. For such servants of God, He will always give them rewards for their faithfulness. You can only be remembered by what you have done. Are you faithful in serving the Lord? Examine yourself!

“Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the LORD, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty” (verse 23). While other leaders in Israel were rendering faithful, sacrificial service to the Lord, the leaders from Meroz refused to join in fighting the enemies of God’s people. Yes, the job had been well done successfully but they were ashamed for their lack of support. As Deborah and Barak partnered together, we also should join hand

with people of like-precious faith to achieve common goal.

Question 4: *What are the consequences of unfaithfulness in God's service?*

Unfaithfulness in the service of God affects one here on earth and in eternity. It makes an individual to incur God's wrath. There will be no rewards for such service. The people will not be blessed through such service. Today, the Lord is calling on all those who are unfaithful in His service to repent. The Lord Jesus told the Christians in Sardis: **"Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee"** (Revelation 3:2, 3).

PRUDENCE IN SERVICE BY SAINTS (Judges 5:24-31; 1:16; Exodus 18:1-12; Numbers 10:29-32)

"Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent" (verse 24). Jael, the wife of Heber, the Kenite was from the descendant of Jethro, Moses' father-in-law (Judges 4:11).

The nature of Jael's service is worth examining. Without military power, she used her wisdom to conquer the enemy. **"He asked water, and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish. She put one hand to the nail and the other hand to the workmen's hammer and, with the hammer, she smote Sisera. She smote off his head when she had pierced and stricken through his temples. At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he bowed, there he fell down dead"** (verses 25-27). Wisdom is the principal thing. Through wisdom, we can achieve great things for the Lord. In our preaching the gospel, we should apply wisdom to reach different classes of youths. To get God's wisdom, we must pray, depend on the Spirit of God and study the word of God. **"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise"** (Proverbs 11:30).

There is reward for everyone who faithfully serves the Lord. **“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister”** (Hebrews 6:10). Deborah, the prophetess, pronounced blessings on Jael for the faithful and committed service she rendered to the Lord. A song writer wrote thus:

*“Shall we be missed, though by others succeeded,
Reaping the fields we in springtime have sown?
No, for the sowers may pass from their labors,
Only remembered by what they have done.
Only remembered, only remembered,
Only remembered by what we have done;
Thus would we pass from the earth and its toiling,
Only remembered by what we have done”.*

LESSON 615

GOD COMMISSIONS GIDEON

Memory Verse: *“And the LORD looked upon him, and said, go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?”*
(Judges 6:14)

TEXT: Judges 6:1-32

God, in His omnipotence, brought Israel from the land of bondage into a land flowing with milk and honey. He did this in faithfulness to the covenant He made with their father Abraham. For them to enjoy this blessed promise, He gave them commandments to guide them into a perfect relationship with Him and with one another. Foremost among the commandments is **“Thou shalt have no other gods before me”** (Exodus 20:3).

In our study today, we shall see how the children of Israel disobeyed this command and God’s punishment on them. From this, we understand that to have God’s promises fulfilled in our lives, we must meet His conditions.

Question 1: *What condition must Christian youths meet to have God’s promises fulfilled in their lives?*

Every Christian youth must obey God’s word if they expect the fulfillment of His promises in their lives. God warned Israel against idolatry repeatedly. Unfortunately, they still went into it, and the wrath of God came upon the whole nation. They were sold into the hands of enemy nations who oppressed, afflicted and spoilt them until they were impoverished.

GRIEVOUS DESTITUTION IN ISRAEL (Judges 6:1-10; Deuteronomy 4:23-28; 30:17,18; 31:20, 21; Joshua 24:20; Samuel 7:3; 1 Kings 9:6, 7; Hosea 8:3; 1 Corinthians 10:14; Colossians 3:5)

Israel as a nation was greatly favored by God. What Israel enjoyed is what the church is enjoying now (un-merited favor of the Lord). Unfortunately, Israel forgot the mercy

and great works of God to them. Later, they cast away God's commandment and went into idolatry.

Question 2: *Why did Israel go into idolatry?*

Israel neglected God's instructions on the worship of idols. **"Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee"** (Exodus 23:32, 33). In order not to go into idolatry, God gave them these specific instructions: (1) not to enter into covenant with the people of the land (Exodus 23:32); (2) not to make marriages with the people of the land (Deuteronomy 7:3, 4); (3) to destroy the entire people of the land (Deuteronomy 7:2). As they got into the land of Canaan, they forsook these injunctions and went into backsliding.

Likewise, God has given instructions to Christian youths on what to do to avoid sin and backsliding. Heavenly-minded youths should be careful to: (i) avoid idolatry of any form (1 Corinthians 10:14); (ii) be separated from the world (2 Corinthians 6:17); (iii) avoid unequal yoke (2 Corinthians 6:14-16); (iv) study and meditate on God's word daily (Joshua 1:8); (v) attend church meetings regularly (Hebrews 10:25).

Question 3: *What were the consequences of Israel's backsliding at this time?*

"For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it. And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD" (verses 5, 6). Israel, once dreaded by the enemy nations became so weak and oppressed. They could not stand before their enemies. At the time of harvest, the Midianites wasted their crops. The fear of the enemies came on them to the extent that they **"made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds"** (verse 2). The oppression from the enemies was so grievous to the extent that Israel **"was greatly impoverished because of**

the Midianites” (verse 6). Sin and backsliding carry similar consequences today. God always removes His defense from backsliders. Thus, they are prone to attacks from the devil and his cohorts. Backsliding brought sickness, affliction and oppression on them (Deuteronomy 28:14-68). When a backslider refuses to repent and die in such a state, he ends up in hell. Backslidden youths should make haste and repent before it is too late.

After suffering many loses, **“the children of Israel cried unto the LORD.”** God heard their cry, reproved them through His prophet, and sent Gideon to deliver them. Sinners and backsliders should cry to the Lord in repentance and He will deliver them.

GREAT DELIVERANCE FOR ISRAEL (Judges 6:11-24; 4:1-4; Hebrew 11:32; Matthew 1: 21; Luke 4:18; Acts 9:16; Mark 16:15)

God spoke to Gideon through His angel and commissioned him to deliver Israel from the hand of the Midianites. **“And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valor”** (verses 11, 12).

Question 4: *What are the evidences that the Lord called and commissioned Gideon to deliver Israel?*

“And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?” (Verse 14). The following are evidences of Gideon’s call: One, it was a clear call. **“And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valor”** (verse 12). Two, there was convincing assurance of God’s presence and support (verse 21). Three, there was also clear mission. He was told what assignment to carryout (verse 14). Four, he had convincing confirmation (verse 17, 21). Five, the certainty of God’s peace was given to him even in troubled time (verse 24). True children of

God also have the assurance of God's peace. The crisis and commotion in our societies should not fret us. **“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me”** (John 14:1). Six, at the end of the battle, Gideon conquered and was triumphant. When a man is sent by God, he will prosper in whatever the Lord gives him to do. This is the most convincing evidence of God's call and commission.

Question 5: *List other persons God called and commissioned in the Bible with evidences of God's call.*

There are other personalities God used as instruments in diverse ways. Noah was called to build an ark of safety by which the human race was not completely erased from the earth (Genesis 6:13-22). Moses was called to deliver the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt (Exodus 3:1- 3). Joshua, David, Paul the apostle were all called, commissioned and used of God in their generations. Our Lord Jesus Christ was sent to the world to save sinners from their sins and prepare them to live with God in heaven. All believers are given the ministry of reconciliation by the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:18). Evangelizing the world is a task which all believers must do. Just as the men of old fulfilled their calling, we must also do the same.

GIDEON DESTROYED BAAL'S ALTAR AS INSTRUCTED: (Judges 6:25-32; 1 Kings 13:2; 18:21-39; 2 Chronicles 34:7; Genesis 35:1-5)

“And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it: And build an altar unto the LORD thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down” (verses 25,26). Before God intervenes in the life of a people or nation, there must be cleansing and rebuilding of the altar of truth first. This is so because God is of a purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Since God is using an individual to deliver his people from bondage, His command to him is to remove the source of their suffering. Christian youths

should learn from this. Whenever they are suffering for sin, it will be wise for them to examine themselves, confess sin and repent fully before God (2 Chronicles 7:13, 14). Gideon obeyed God and destroyed altars of Baal at night.

Question 6: *Did opposition stopped Gideon from doing God's will?*

No. Though, Gideon was threatened to be killed by the men of his father's household, God delivered him. God used Gideon's father - Joash to deliver him (verse 31). Doing God's will might not always be accepted by men, but like Gideon, you will definitely prevail over all obstacles and fulfil God's purpose for your life and humanity. To have a successful ministry, you must know what God wants you to do and pursue it vigorously. Endeavour to heed God's instructions at all times and the God that gave Gideon victory and success will also grant you victory.

LESSON 616

GIDEON MOBILIZES ISRAEL FOR WAR

Memory Verse: *“But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him”* (Judges 6:34)

TEXT: Judges 6:33-40

In the preceding study, we saw how Gideon was commissioned by the Lord to deliver the children of Israel from the captivity under the Midianites. He was led by the Lord to select his army and position them for a fight against Midian. The Midianites came with several other nations to battle against Israel. But, in agreement with the will of God, Gideon who was the leader of Israel gathered them to fight. His request to God for a sign was to know that they were going to win in the battle ahead of them.

Christian youths are, therefore, encouraged to ensure that they do not feel intimidated by the enemies and challenges all around them. They should hold on to the promises of God and rely on Him for desired breakthrough.

GREAT CONFLICT BEFORE ISRAEL (Judges 6:33; Micah 4:12, 13; Deuteronomy 1:30; Zechariah 14:3; 1 Timothy 6:12)

“Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel” (Judges 6:33). There was a great war ahead of Israel as their enemies gathered themselves together. Midian went into a collaboration with people from other countries to build a very huge and strong military force. They came with all their weapons of war and strategies to combat Israel.

Question 1: *What are some of the conflicts youths go through today?*

There are several conflicts which youths pass through today that may challenge their beliefs and convictions. These conflicts include peer pressure, temptation to indulge in worldly music, examination malpractices, cybercrimes,

and worldly ceremonies. We need to know that living as a believer involves a number of spiritual battles. The devil is not pleased with the destiny of any believer and he is therefore fighting to draw the believer out of the faith. **“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall”** (1 Corinthians 10:12).

As we face various battles of life, Christian youths should not be intimidated by the number or size of their enemies or those who oppose the truth. Victory in a war is not tied to the number of the army but on the plans set up to ensure victory. God does not save with numbers, but He delivers those who put their trust in Him.

GIDEON’S PREPARATION FOR THE BATTLE (Judges 6: 34, 35; Deuteronomy 20:3, 4; Proverbs 21:31; Luke 14:28–32; 2 Corinthians 10:3–5; Psalm 20: 7; 37:5)

After hearing the cry of war sounded by the enemy, Gideon decided to raise soldiers to fight. He sounded the alarm to declare it was war time. He did not rest on the possible victories he had experienced before now but with zeal took the battle ahead of him, trusting God. Sounding the alarm, he had Abiezer with him. He went further to send messengers to Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali who came up to fight the battle which was ahead of them.

Question 2: *What lessons do we learn from Gideon’s preparations?*

“But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him” (verse 34). The God-factor was the major difference between Gideon and many others who had led Israel. He believed in God and his actions were in accordance with God’s directives. Before he called the people, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him and he followed the leading in determining his actions. Many times, people expect some pastors to operate with certain type of anointing while they remain permanently dependent on these pastors. Gideon was not a prominent person and he did not have backers before the Lord selected and started to use him. The next thing Gideon did was planning which is a critical path to success. Without planning, one will not be able to achieve

great results. Proper Planning determines the height one can achieve. As Christian youths, the important plan we should work on is our academic time- table to help us control how we study and ensure we optimize the use of our time.

Gideon knew that he was not going to win the war without the people. He therefore sent emissaries to call people to prepare for war. He also ensured that he had people who were around him helping him in organizing the battles ahead. We all need people to assist us in any endeavor we get ourselves engaged in. To get the best set of people who can help us get our dreams realized, it is important we go to God who understands everyone to guide us.

Gideon's zeal in going to war against the enemies of Israel also serves as a challenge to us. We should defend the kingdom of God with all our zeal and power. As citizens of the kingdom, the Lord is telling us to: **"... earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints"** (Jude 1:3). We need to fight to win. We should fight against sin, against the devil, against worldliness and all other semblances of evil. Christian youths should fight against compromise, negative influence and friends who may seek to draw them away from the fold.

GOD'S CONFIRMATION OF VICTORY FOR ISRAEL:
(Judges 6:36–40; Isaiah 45:1–3; 65:24; 1 Samuel 17:45–52; John 14:12; 1 John 4:4)

Having not fought in this type of battle before and in dire need to mobilize and encourage the people to fight, Gideon went back to the source of their survival. He wanted a sign from the Lord to confirm they would be victorious as they went into the battle. God gave them great miraculous signs to stir up their faith. Gideon asked for further signs and the Lord, knowing his heart that he was not being mischievous or insincere, responded to his request with a spectacular miracle.

Question 3: *Explain the miracles of the signs given to Gideon.*

Gideon, who knew how to speak to God and hear from Him, spoke to the Lord that he wanted a sign to show if

Israel would be saved by his hand. **“Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said”** (Judges 6:37). The Lord answered his prayers and he found out when he woke up in the morning that the whole ground was dried but there was dew on the fleece. Soon after, he asked for a reversal of the miracle and said **“... let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew”** (Judges 6:39). In making his request, he was submissive and gentle, pleading with the Lord not to deem him faithless or unbelieving. The Lord also, knowing the state of his heart, answered him. The whole ground had dew while the fleece was dried.

“God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good” (Numbers 23:19). As youths today, we are not expected to question whatever promises the Lord gives us. God fulfils His promises. In spite of the faithlessness of Gideon, God still used him. God is still using people who are sincere and submissive today as they can be trained for greater assignments in God’s kingdom. God wants us to have a broken spirit and a contrite heart. We are then expected to have a fixed heart on the Lord.

God still does miracles today. He says **“For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed”** (Malachi 3: 6). Whenever you need the intervention of the Lord in your life all that is required of you is to pray to the Lord in faith. However, the unbelievers need to repent and give their lives to Christ. As we hold on faithfully, we shall experience miracles in our schools, families and households.

LESSON 617

SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTES AMONG BELIEVERS

Memory Verse: *“Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him”* (Luke 17:3).

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 6:1-8

Paul, the apostle had been dealing with different cases, where he corrected and instructed the Corinthian church. In our text, he found it necessary to admonish them on how to handle differences. Prior to this time, they had employed the public jury who shared no common faith and knowledge with them. Paul considered this as 2demeaning. So, he challenged the church that they should be able to settle such disputes among themselves since they shall judge the fallen angels and the world. Moreover, he admonished the defrauded believer to suffer the wrong if the matter was not settled amicably, instead of going to public law court for 3litigation. Finally, he rebuked the defrauding brother.

Question 1: *Will it ever be possible for believers not to offend one another?*

While here on earth, we may sometimes offend one another. Paul wanted offences that occur among believers to be settled amicably. However, how to go about settling an offence is dependent on understanding what the offence and its implication is.

HANDLING OF OFFENCES AMONG BELIEVERS: (1 Corinthians 6:1-3; 1 Peter 4:8; Romans 16:17; 1 Timothy 6:3-6; 2 Timothy 3:1-7)

“Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?” (Verse 1).

Question 2: *Was Paul addressing sinners or saints?*

Paul was addressing a congregation of believers. He had

earlier referred to them as those “...that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints...” (1 Corinthians 1:2). So, when he said “**Dare any of you**” we know he was referring to any of the saints. Also, when he said “**another**”, he was referring to “**another**” of their kind. What he said in verses 6 and 7 makes it clearer that he was referring to offences that happen among brethren. “**But brother goeth to law with brother... ye go to law one with another...**”

Question 3: Describe the kind of offences that Paul was referring to here.

When Paul used the words “**defrauded**” or “**defraud**”, he was referring to ungodly acts among brethren. As a matter of fact, he called them “...**the smallest matters**” (verse 2). These, obviously, were issues that bother on living a life that is below the requirement of heaven. These issues that come up in interpersonal relationship, Paul himself said they were “**things that pertain to this life**” (verse 3). That means, they were issues of life that had eternal consequences. These were the kind of offences that the Bible says love should overlook. What kind of offence could Paul be talking about then? Such small matters as borrowing with delayed repayments or no repayment, collecting things from brethren without returning and such similar offences.

However, the Bible also states some other kinds of offences. Such offences are those that are caused by unbelievers against the truth and the doctrine which is according to godliness. People who do such are not saved or converted. They openly indulge in sinful or criminal acts; they promote false doctrines and derail others from the way to heaven. How we deal with each offence depends solely on what category it falls into.

GODLY APPROACHES TO SETTLING OFFENCES: (1 Corinthians 6:4-; Exodus 18: 21, 22; Matthew 18:7-9; 15-17; Colossians 3:13)

“If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church” (1 Corinthians 6:4).

Question 4: What should believers do if they have

misunderstanding among themselves according to Paul?

Paul was of the opinion that saints who shall judge the world and the angels should be able to judge small matters of things that pertain to this life. He told them to allow the church to settle the matter among them. He meant that differences among brethren should not be taken to an unbelieving judge in the public jury. Once the offence is categorized to be among the “**smallest matters**”, it should be settled within, by any of the various means that has been scripturally recommended.

Question 5: What is the first step that should be taken by the offended in settling offences?

Paul recommended two ways to settling offences among brethren. Any of these must be preceded by personal effort to resolve the matter between the offended and the offender. The first approach is to set mature brethren from the church to look into the matter. This is necessary, especially, if the offence is seen as being great and cannot be overlooked. He completely condemned a brother taking another brother to the law court before the unbeliever. **“I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? No, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers”** (verse 5, 6).

This method had been instituted long ago among the children of Israel, to set judges to settle their matters. **“Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men...and place such over them, to be rulers...And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that ...small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee”** (Exodus 18:21,22). The Lord also says that when we have tried to settle a matter with someone to no avail, we should call two or three more brethren. If they are unable to resolve it, then we can call on the church. If the offender does not listen to the church, he could be seen or dealt with as an infidel. If anyone who claims to be a brother defies all peace-making means and becomes wild or stubborn in error and shows the characteristics of an unbeliever, we

might need to treat him as an unbeliever. There are some offences that unbelievers commit that we just take as their manner of life. There are however, some that we report to the authority concerned. This explains why we sometimes have law enforcement agents in our retreats.

The second approach is for the person that is offended to overlook the matter and bear the loss. **“Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?”** (Verse 7). He could just simply forgive, forget and forbear.

CORRECTING THE OFFENDERS IN LOVE AND HUMILITY: (1 Corinthians 6:7, 8; Romans 2:1; 2 Samuel 23:3; Exodus 18:21, 22; Matthew 18:15; 7:1-5; James 5:19, 20)

“Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren” (verse 7, 8). Here, Paul demonstrates the qualities of one who is expected to be involved in settling differences among brethren. He was very frank and honest. He said, **“Nay, ye do wrong...”**

Question 6: *What are the qualities expected in the life of someone who wants to settle offences?*

It takes the fear of God and respect for the truth to tell someone that he/she is wrong. The basic qualifications for anyone to judge in such matters of the church are having the fear of God, hating covetousness or any form of reward of iniquity, having the principle of justice and fair play etc. People of questionable characters should not be allowed to judge others.

What God expects of the offending person is to accept, and repent of whatever wrongs he/she is accused of, if he/she has actually done them. The goal should not be to show how better we are but to lead him or her into righteousness and save him or her from possible eternal dangers. Where a so-called believer refuses to be corrected, there is great punishment and danger that may befall him. **“He, that**

being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy” (Proverbs 29:1).

LESSON 618

SANCTITY OF THE BELIEVER'S BODY

Memory Verse: “*What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?*” (1Corinthians 6:19).

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 6:9-20

Paul had just finished counselling the church against going to the law court when they wrong one another. He told them, “Nay, **ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren**” (verse 8). In our study today, he further stressed the penalty for sin so that believers at the edge of sinning might take caution. Furthermore, he talked about the transformation of believers and their expected translation into heaven. He encouraged believers to have self-discipline in order not to be barriers to others who are trying to find their way to heaven. Much more, he emphasized the kind of sanctity that is expected of the life of a believer. Our body is the temple of the Holy Ghost and we must treat it with such sacredness that befits the Lord.

THE TRANSGRESSION AND TRAGEDY OF SINNERS:
(1Corinthians 6:9, 10; 1 John 3:4; Romans 1:29-32; 3:23; Ephesians 5:3-6; 1Timothy 5:6; Revelation 21:8)

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God” (verses 9, 10).

Question 1: *What is transgression?*

When someone commits sin, he/she has violated the law of God. Sin is what is called transgression. Anyone who transgresses is referred to as a sinner. The Bible also calls them the unrighteous, abominable, wicked and many other names. Some of the transgressions mentioned in our text are: fornication, idolatry, adultery, homosexuality, theft, covetousness, drunkenness, reviling or railing and others.

Question 2: *Mention some transgressions that people commit and explain them.*

Quite a few of them need some further explanations. To be effeminate is for a boy to act or behave like a girl. Abusers of themselves with mankind are people of the same gender who do things that are naturally expected of those of the different gender. The word “**revilers**” is also rendered “**railer**” and it means being abusive. “**Extortioners**” are those who are oppressors – they obtain things from others by the use of force. There are some other transgressions in other passages. The book of Romans talks of “**maliciousness**”, a temper which delights in hurting others; “**debate**”, in this context means contention, strife, heated argument, quarrel and confrontation connected with anger and heated zeal; “**malignity**”, putting the worse construction on what people do; “**whisperers**”, those who secretly excite suspicion in others and give hints of evil in others; “**implacable**”, those who will not be reconciled where there is a quarrel.

Question 3: *What are the consequences of transgressions?*

The consequence of all these evils and transgression is death and eternal loss. Paul emphasized this over and again. It is a tragedy! All that die in their sin shall go into the eternal lake of fire. “**But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death**” (Revelation 21:8). They shall be eternally separated from God.

THE TRANSFORMATION AND TRANSLATION OF SAINTS: (1 Corinthians 6:11-14; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Titus 2:11-14; 3:3-7; 1 Peter 1:14-19; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17)

“**And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God**” (verse 11). When someone identifies any or some of the transgressions we earlier discussed in his/her own life and repents of them, the result is a transformation of life by the working of the Holy Spirit.

Question 4: What is the result of transformation?

The life of transgression becomes a thing of the past. The transformed person is washed, justified and sanctified by the Spirit of God in the name of the Lord. That is what Paul expected of all believers. Of course, that is what God expects of those of us who claim to have become born again. If anyone claims to have been born again or to have received the grace of God, he/she should have a totally changed life for good and the better. The blood of Christ washes us and gives us a state of purity that is uncommon; His grace helps us to maintain permanent victory over sins.

“All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any” (verse 12). This statement expresses the kind of discipline that is manifested by those who have experienced genuine transformation. Though they are free to do anything, they are to deny themselves of these things sometimes, if doing them will make another person stumble. They are not expected to enjoy anything that causes offences to others. Any form of pleasure that can defile either themselves or others is shunned. **“Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body”** (verse 13).

Question 5: Who are the people to be translated?

“And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power” (verse 14). A life of transparent holiness qualifies us for the rapture when the Lord returns. **“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ”** (Titus 2:11-13).

THE TEMPLE AND THE TABERNACLE OF THE SPIRIT:

(1 Corinthians 6:15-20; Romans 6:11-14; 1Peter 1:14-19)

“Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid”

(verse 15). A believer's body is likened to **“the members of Christ”**. That is, a part of the body of Christ. Christ will never use any part of His body to do evil. Hence, we should not use our bodies to do evil. It is also likened to **“the temple of the Holy Ghost”**. A temple is a place where God is worshipped. So our bodies are supposed to be for the glory of God. **“What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's”** (verses 19, 20).

Question 6: *How can we glorify God in our body?*

We can glorify God in our body by avoiding fornication and anything that glues us to corruption and by ensuring that we are of the same spirit with the Lord. **“What? Know ye not that he which is joined to a harlot is one body? For two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body”**. When we are joined to the Lord at salvation, we have the same mind with Him and we obey His commandments.

LESSON 619

SCRIPTURAL PERSPECTIVE ON MARRIAGE

Memory Verse: *“Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband”* (1 Corinthians 7:2).

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 7:1-40

The institution of marriage is God’s design for man. He initiated it to accomplish his plan and purpose for man on earth. It is completely God’s idea and mankind has to follow what He has laid down in the Holy Scriptures. One of the reasons God instituted marriage is for man not to be alone. No animal or any other creature was good to be man’s companion (Genesis 2:19, 20). **“And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him”** (Genesis 2:18). God also wanted man to fill the earth and the only way to accomplish this is through marriage. By it, man will multiply and increase on the earth. **“And God blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth”** (Genesis 1:28).

Question 1: *Should boys and girls be taught marital issues since they are not mature to marry?*

Scriptural pattern of marriage is that a man should leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and they become one flesh (Genesis 2:24). Though youths are still dependent on their parents, there is need for them to be taught such subjects of interest to God as marriage.

The issues on marriage should not be made secret to them. God’s desire is that youths become responsible and godly parents later in life. **“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we**

through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

GOD’S COUNSEL TO THE UNMARRIED (1 Corinthians 7:1, 2, 6-9, 25-32, 36-38; Genesis 2:18, 20-24; 1 Corinthians 11:8,9; Hebrews 13:4; Genesis 6:1-3; Deuteronomy 7:3; Corinthians 6:14)

“Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman” (1 Corinthians 7:1). The subject of marriage has always posed controversies to man. These include whether to marry more than one wife or not; marry same sex or not; marry and divorce afterwards or not; to mention but a few. These controversies emanated from various perversions by man in the area of marriage. These perversions were as a result of human error from the beginning. **“And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose”** (Genesis 6:1,2). This evil act of ancient men attracted divine judgment. The advent of the Christian faith brought liberty to man and the Corinthian church was very inquisitive to have a proper understanding of certain controversial issues on marriage and Christian fellowship. They asked Paul to throw light on the relationship that should exist between a man and a woman in the church. Paul’s answer to their question was that a man should not touch a woman. Any man or woman that finds it difficult to obey this simple rule is counseled to go and marry.

Question 2: Give scriptural reasons why youths should resist the temptation to touch the opposite gender.

The **“touch”** in our text literally means to have carnal knowledge. So, Paul meant it is good for a man not to have carnal knowledge of one who is not his spouse.

However, this does not imply that we could go ahead touching opposite genders indiscriminately. Such indiscriminate **“touch”** leads to immoral relationship. Sincerely, before a boy will touch a girl, he must have been nursing some ill thoughts in his heart toward her for some

time. That thought of the heart is what Jesus called lust. Since the heart is exposed to temptation when Christian youths become careless, they are warned not to touch the opposite gender. **“But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart”** (Matthew 5:28). Again, the human body is sensitive to touch. When there is a touch and the boy/girl does not resist it, it might send negative signal to the boy and the girl. This may lead them to immoral relationship. The Scriptural position on immorality is damnation in hell (Revelation 21:8). **“Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death”** (James 1:15).

However, in emergency situation such as rescuing accident victims, we should not shy away from the responsibility of assisting the victim for the sole reason that we do not want to touch the opposite gender. This would lead to loss of life. This was the same attitude of the Priest and the Levite (Luke 10:30-37).

Question 3: *What is the scriptural command on marriage?*

The scriptural command on marriage is that every man and woman should marry. No one should deliberately refuse to marry. As Paul considered some of the troubles and cares one goes through in marriage, he advised that he wished that all men be like him (verses 6-9). However, if all men should remain unmarried, how will God’s desire for man to multiply on earth be fulfilled? There are people who refuse to get married, yet get involved in immoral acts. Some get involved in masturbation, lesbianism, and homosexuality. Instead of living in deception, the Scripture says, **“if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn”** (verse 9). The Bible’s command is, **“Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband”** (verse 7). In the beginning, God said, **“It is not good that the man should be alone”**.

In verses 25 and 26, the issue of virgins was touched. These are boys and girls who refuse to defile themselves. **“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I**

have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:2). This should be a challenge to contemporary boys and girls in the church. Are you a virgin? Youths are supposed to remain chaste and keep their virginity till the day of their wedding. This is what makes marriage honorable. **“Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge”** (Hebrews 13:4).

GOD’S COUNSEL TO THE MARRIED (1 Corinthians 7:3-5, 13-24, 26, 28, 29-31, 33-35; Ephesians 5:21-28; 6:5; 1 Corinthians 14:34; Colossians 3:18; Titus 2:5; 1 Peter 3:1-7)

Many people go into marriage without adequate knowledge. Though, there are books written on marriage, many of these books have not found solution to the myriad of problems in marriage. In our church, during courtship, we are given a topic which deals with the ideal and real marriage life. Many do not understand these issues until they are married. As we seek to have ideal marriages, the best guide is the word of God. Paul, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, admonished the husband and wife to render to each other due benevolence (verse 3). The man and his wife need to be kind, generous, and compassionate to each other as one flesh. There should be no selfish display at any time by the wife or husband. Where it is found, it negates real Christian character. This is one of the reasons for conflict in many Christian homes today.

Question 4: *What other command is given in the Bible to the husband and wife?*

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body” (Ephesians 5:22, 23). The wife is commanded to submit to her husband. This is allowing the husband to lead her and the family. And the husband is to love the wife as Christ loves the Church. Where the rule is practiced in the fear of the Lord, the home of believers would be blissful and God’s presence, power and prosperity will be available there. Couples should be

careful to observe this rule. It is part of God's command that we must strive to obey unconditionally. The woman should make effort to be of godly character like Sarah, and the husband should make effort to understand the wife and dwell with her peaceably no matter the condition.

In marriage, there is fellowship. Through this, the purpose of procreation and pleasure are achieved. It is designed by God to bring oneness, unity and love in marital relationship. It is only designed for the married man and woman. Any youth indulging in it is sinning against God, and his body. It attracts eternal judgment in hell (Revelation 21:8); and while here on earth, such a person is exposed to pain, diseases, disgrace and shame. However, if you have already fallen into this sin, there is forgiveness with God. Besides, believers should be watchful and resist the temptation to commit immorality. **"Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body"** (1 Corinthians 6:18).

GOD'S CONCEPT OF PERMANENCE OF MARRIAGE: (1 Corinthians 7:10, 11, 27, 28, 39, 40; Malachi 2:16; Matthew 5:31, 32; 19:6; Mark 10:9)

One of the controversial areas of marriage is the issue of divorce and re-marriage. The Bible is not silent on this issue. The position of God on this is very clear. **"And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband"** (verse 10).

Question 5: *What is the Scriptures' view on divorce?*

Divorce is a situation in which a man who is married to a woman seeks for separation. They have the feeling that they can no longer live together due to misunderstanding. They allow themselves to be overtaken by the devil and the flesh. They no longer obey the word of God on forgiveness, patience, and forbearance. Divorce comes whenever a man or a woman deviates from the standard of the word of God guiding their marriage. **"For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit that ye deal**

not treacherously” (Malachi 2:16). Whatever God hates should not be practiced if we truly fear Him. The Jews asked Christ a question on this issue. They said Moses asked them to give a bill of divorcement. Christ refuted that and said it was because of the hardness of their hearts. Christ said that it was not so from the beginning. Even today, people go into divorce or separation due to hardness of heart.

No youth should plan going into marriage to divorce or separate later. This is why the emphasis on praying to know the will of God in marriage is important. Christian youths should be sincere while praying. Marriage is a serious issue and youths should avoid any form of carnality which may lead to regret later in life because marriage is binding for life. **“The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord”** (verse 39). It can only be terminated through the death of one of the partners. Under this condition, the living partner can re-marry.

LESSON 620

LIMITS OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

Memory Verse: “*All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any*” (1 Corinthians 8:9)

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Paul the apostle had been answering some vital questions brought to him by the Corinthian church.

This church, though having different gifts, still think it necessary to seek for clarity in areas of the scriptures they did not understand. They sought for explanations from the apostle on these issues so that they could give the right application. No matter how long we might have been in the church, there might still be need for the teaching of the word of God. We should emulate the Corinthian church by seeking answers to questions from our pastors and mature leaders.

Question 1: *State some benefits of asking questions in the church and at school.*

Youths should not fail to ask question when necessary. After personal reading of either scriptural or academic materials, we should ask questions on any area not understood. Asking question leads to clarification and more understanding. This will result in maturing us spiritually and mentally. This will make us able teachers later in life. We will be grounded in the truth, and be free from deception and errors. In this study, we shall be looking at the nothingness of idol, Christian conducts with respect to meals offered to idol, and consideration which we must give to weak believers.

CHRISTIAN CONCEPT ON IDOL WORSHIP (1 Corinthians 8:1-4; 8:19; Isaiah 40:18-26; 44:9-17; 45:20; Deuteronomy 4:16-19; Jeremiah 2:11-13; Acts 7:41; 17:29,30; 1Corinthians 10:7; 10:19, 20)

“Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth” (I Corinthians 8:1). Paul the apostle rebuked the Corinthian church on the issue of contention and counselled them not to look to man but Christ. He enlightened them on the area of Christian marriage and divorce. Now, he moves ahead to enlighten them on idolatry. His focus is on things offered to idol. The Corinthian church did not have the right knowledge of the Bible concerning idol worship. Right application of knowledge should make the possessor to become humble and grow in Christian love that edifies the church. It is also seen in submissive spirit to church leadership operating in the will of God.

Question 2: *What is the danger of knowledge without humility?*

It is dangerous when an individual assumes he has knowledge without humility. **“And if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know”** (verse 2). Whatever knowledge we have is given by God. Such knowledge should be used to edify the body of Christ and profit humanity. Instead of assuming we know too much, we should seek to have Christian love and abound in it. It is through Christian love we can be profitable to one another. Growing in love for God makes us better Christians (verse 3).

Question 3: *What is an idol?*

An idol is an invention through which man tends to liken God to lifeless, powerless, and mortal object in worship (Romans 1:21-23). It was with the knowledge that idol is nothing in the world that some believers in the Corinthian church ate things offered to idols. They did not see idols as anything but stones, woods, trees, irons, etc., made with man’s hand. They saw idols as objects fashioned with men’s hands without life in them (Jeremiah 2:13). They wondered at the ignorance of the unbelievers who worship, sacrifice and tremble at valueless, lifeless, and powerless images. **“As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one”** (verse 4).

Unfortunately, there are youths that think an idol is something and are afraid when they see it erected. They even fear idol worshippers and their powerless priests more than God. This should not be so. **“The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains. He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree that will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image that shall not be moved. Have ye not known? Have ye not heard? Hath it not been told you from the beginning? Have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth?”** (Isaiah 40:18-21). Once you are born again, greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4).

CHRISTIAN CONDUCT ON THINGS OFFERED TO IDOL: (1 Corinthians 8:4-8; 10:20, 25, 27; Daniel 1:8; Psalm 141:4; Proverbs 23:3)

“As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many; But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him” (verses 4-6). There are fundamental things revealed in these verses. Before the verdict on eating or not eating things offered to idol, Paul spoke on the Godhead. He revealed that there is only one God and one Lord, Jesus. In Him are all things both in heaven and on the earth. Beside the God of heaven and earth, there are no other gods. It was a common practice in Corinth to first offer animals to idols before cooking. Some of them also took it to the market for sales. Friends and neighbors normally come together to feast on things offered to idols. They see them as dainties of their gods. There were some believers who, with knowledge of the vanity of idols, ate anything given to them. They did not care if it was offered to idols or not (1 Corinthians 10:27).

Question 4: *Should a believer eat things offered to idol?*

“But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils” (1 Corinthians 10:20). The Scriptures forbid us from having any fellowship with the devil. Paul emphasized further that **“Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s Table, and of the table of devils”** (1 Corinthians 10:21). Youths who are prone to attending ungodly ceremonies are prone to eat things offered to idols. Some ceremonies done by the unbelievers where animals are slaughtered and later used for feasting are idolatrous. No Christian youth is expected to eat such meals. King David said, **“Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practice wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties.”** (Psalm 141:4). When Daniel saw that the meat used in cooking in the king’s palace in Babylon were defiled and offered to idols, he **“purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat”** (Daniel 1:8). Eating such meals bring defilement and partakers are seen by God as idolaters.

CHRISTIAN CONSIDERATION OF OTHERS (1 Corinthians 8:9-13, 28, 29; 1 Corinthians 10:23-28; 2 Corinthians 4:2; Romans 13:5; 1 Timothy 1:15, 19)

Paul emphasized that we should not judge ourselves on whether we eat or not since, **“meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse”** (verse 8). The emphasis of Paul here is similar to that of Christ. Christ’s disciples were accused of eating with unwashed hands. Jesus told them that eating with unwashed hand does not bring defilement. Whatever we eat is passed to the lavatory later. **“But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak”** (verse 9). If strong believers are to eat from the table of idol because of their faith, the weak ones will stumble because they do not have the same level of faith and knowledge. Consideration, therefore, should be given to those with weak conscience. There are so-called believers today claiming to be at liberty, but living carelessly in dressing,

friendship, worship, conversation and ceremonies. They are very disorderly, indecent and indisciplined in their comportment. Are you one of them? Are you doing things that have negative effects on other youths? Are you one of Satan's instruments in promoting obscene dressing, immorality and other vices because you think you are at liberty to do whatever you like? Remember, **“But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea”** (Matthew 18:6).

Question 5: *What is conscience?*

“For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?”

(Verse 10, 11). A conscience is our moral sense that makes us know what is right or wrong. It is our spiritual inner policeman that either justifies or condemns our actions and reactions. There are various kinds of conscience in the Scriptures. Some of them are: **pure conscience** (1 Timothy 3:9); **good conscience** (Acts 23:1); **conscience seared with hot iron** (1 Timothy 4:2); **weak conscience** (1 Corinthians 8:12); **defiled conscience** (Titus 1:15); **dead conscience** (Hebrews 9:14); and **evil conscience** (Hebrews 10:22). What kind of conscience is yours?

Believers who think they are strong in their conscience should always give consideration to those who are weak in their daily conduct. Christian youths should not just follow anybody because they see them coming to church. They might belong to the category of negative consciences stated above. If you follow them, you might end up in error and hell. Read the Bible and allow God's words to guide you daily.

LESSON 621

PAUL'S EXEMPLARY LIFE IN MINISTRY

Memory Verse: "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:27).

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 9:1-27

Paul the apostle had been writing to the Corinthian church to correct wrong notions and behavior. He dealt with division, carnality, immorality in the church, going to the law and other issues. In our study today he addressed the issue of practical leadership by using himself as an example to enlighten the Church on the need for soul-winning and Discipling of believers while preparing for heaven.

RIGHTS OF GOD'S MINISTERS (1 Corinthians 9:1-14; Acts 18:1-17; Deuteronomy 20:6; 25:4; 2 Timothy 2:6; 1 Thessalonians 2:4-9)

Paul was an apostle appointed and approved of God. "**Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are not ye my work in the Lord?**" (Verse 1). He had seen Jesus on his way to Damascus (Acts 9:1 -9, 17). Unfortunately, some people in the Corinthian church which Paul was an instrument to raise up, challenged his authority and ministry. He had labored greatly to establish the church in this city. "**After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;**

... And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks" (Acts 18:1, 4). In the process of preaching the gospel in Corinth, he was opposed, persecuted, and taken to judgement (Acts 18:6, 12-16). However, God was with him and gave him breakthrough (Acts 18:8-11).

Question 1: What is the secret of success in life and ministry?

Using Paul the apostle and his work at Corinth as a case

study, we learn the secret of success in life and ministry. This include hard work, perseverance, patience, endurance, relying on the promises of God, faith in God, having great expectation for breakthrough and focus on the goal. With the above qualities, he was absolutely right to ask them: **“Am I not an apostle?”** He was truly an apostle of Jesus Christ. He sacrificed and suffered much for the gospel of Christ and His kingdom. He did not use his privilege as a leader to exploit the people. This is an exemplary life in ministry. No wonder, he challenged his followers and Christian youths today to follow him as he followed Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1; 4:16).

To sum up his reply to his critics, he asked: **“Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? Or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? Or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the Law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?”** (Verses 7-9).

Question 2: *Is it right for the church to take care of God’s ministers?*

“If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? ... Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel” (verses 11, 14). It is the responsibility of the church to take care of God’s servants. In the case of Paul, he declares: **“If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ”** (verse 12). However, the ministers should not abuse this privilege. We should follow biblical example.

REWARDS FOR GOSPEL MINISTERS (1 Corinthians 9:15-23; Romans 15,16; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; Daniel 12:3; Psalm 126:5,6)

“But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void” (verse 15). As Paul listed

his rights as a minister, he also limited these rights for control and moderation in ministry. He disciplined himself and did not want these things to be done for him. He prefers to die than for any man to make his glory void. **“For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”** (Verse 16). Paul expressed that a necessity is laid upon him to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. How do we see ourselves today?

Question 3: *What is the Gospel?*

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). The gospel is God’s love in Christ to the dying world. The gospel is showing sinners the need to accept and believe in Christ as the only remedy for their sins. The gospel is telling sinners how God paid the price for the forgiveness of their sins through Christ on the cross and believing on Him who will set them free from God’s wrath and judgement throughout eternity. The gospel is persuading sinners to accept God’s only Son for forgiveness; and those who accept Him will not perish but have everlasting life.

Question 4: *How can we be effective in preaching the gospel?*

To be effective in preaching the gospel, we must seek the Lord for His leading, be ready to pay the sacrifice for winning souls, show and share the love of Christ with sinners always. We must also be committed to effective follow-up (Isaiah 6:8). There is danger in failing to preach the gospel to sinners. We are appointed as spiritual watchmen over sinners, to warn them of the danger of a Christ-less eternity. If we warn them of coming judgement, we will deliver our souls and if not, their blood will be required at our hands (Ezekiel 3:17, 18).

“For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me” (verse 17). Rendering a willing service to God in the area of soul-winning will give one great rewards in eternity (Daniel 12:3).

Question 5: *What are the rewards for soul-winning?*

Great rewards await those who evangelize others. They will shine throughout eternity (Daniel 12:3). A book of remembrance will be written concerning them (Malachi 3:16). They will have crowns of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:1, 28). They will rejoice forever and ever. **“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing”** (2 Timothy 4:8).

“For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you” (verses 19-23). In ministering the gospel to all groups of sinners, Paul humbled himself to identify with all. It is our duty as Christian youths to identify various groups of sinners and map out strategies on how to reach them with the gospel.

Question 6: *Identify various groups of sinners in our schools and community.*

The various groups of sinners in schools and communities include the unconcerned, self-righteous sinners, contented church-goers, the obstinate, rebellious sinners, hypocritical fault-finders, the concerned sinners, the fearful, etc. Therefore, the soul-winners must be vast in the word of God and be skillful in applying the word to win them for Christ. This is where the Spirit and wisdom of God is highly needed.

RUNNING TO WIN THE PRIZE (1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Hebrews 12:1-4; Daniel 1:8; 1 Timothy 6:9-12)

“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible” (verses 24, 25). Christianity is a race. It takes discipline, determination and patience to reach the end successfully. If we must get to heaven, we must be overcomers. To overcome means to conquer and defeat your opponent. Your greatest enemy is sin. To get to heaven, we must overcome sin, self and Satan. That three-fold evil can make it impossible for you to be ready for the coming of Christ. Hence, to overcome, you need to conquer them.

Question 7: *How can Christian youths be overcomers?*

“But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (verse 27). If we are going to overcome, we must be ready to pay the price. You cannot make it at the rapture if you do not make up your mind to stand firm and serve the Lord to the end. We must know why we are born again. Therefore, we need to resist temptation, overcome and persevere to the end. The world will want to defile us and make us unfit for heaven. It is our determination or lack of it that will prove if we will make it to the end. Will you allow the transient things of this world to take eternity from you? **“But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses”** (1 Timothy 6:11, 12). Be prepared to fight sin, self and Satan so that you can keep the faith.

LESSON 622

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Memory Verse: *“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come”* (1 Corinthians 11:26).

TEXT: Matthew 26:26-29; Luke 22:17-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-30.

The Lord’s Supper is the only feast commanded to be observed in the New Testament by Jesus Christ in remembrance of Him before His ascension into heaven. **“And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, take this, and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, this is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me”** (Luke 22:17-19).

Question 1: *Is the Lord’s instruction on the Lord’s Supper a mandate?*

The instruction of Christ on the Lord’s Supper is a commandment. Like every other Bible command, it requires prompt obedience from every youth who hope to inherit eternal life and spend eternity with God in heaven. Born again boys and girls should make effort to always be ready to participate in the Lord’s Supper. Very soon, another observance of the Lord’s Supper will take place, start preparing from now.

CHRIST’S INSTITUTION OF THE LORD’S SUPPER: (Matthew 26:17, 20, 26-30; Mark 14:16-25; Luke 2:41, 42; John 2:13, 23; Luke 22:1, 7, 8, 14-20; 1 Corinthians 5:7, 8)

The Lord’s Supper in the New Testament is similar to the Old Testament feast of the Passover given by God to the Israelites through Moses. The Passover was instituted and observed in Egypt the night the Israelites were released from Egypt. That night, God destroyed the entire first born male child of both man and beast in Egypt. The Israelites

were pre-informed to take a lamb of one year old according to the house of their father (Exodus 12:3). They were also commanded by the Lord to eat unleavened bread. As they obeyed, God spared them from the destroyer.

Question 2: *Did Jesus participate in the feast of the Passover while on earth?*

Jesus, while on earth always participated in the Passover feast. **“Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover”** (Luke 2:41). Jesus, as a teenager, followed his parents who were also participants of the Passover feast. In this last Passover, Christ replaced the Passover with the Lord’s Supper.

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:26-28). Christ is the fulfillment of the law. The coming of Christ to earth gave rise to the New Testament and an end of the Old. The Old Testament was a pointer to Jesus Christ. This is why we say that Christ came to fulfill the Law which was not known to the Jews. For the Church, Christ said, **“this is my blood of the new testament”**. The Passover indicates death and destruction passing over the children of Israel while in Egypt. They were spared because of the mark of the blood on their door posts. This is a type of the Cross through which the world would be saved from destruction in hell. The blood of Christ, the Pascal Lamb of God, is shed for many for the remission of sins. He is the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29).

CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS ON THE LORD’S SUPPER: (1 Corinthians 11: 20-28; Luke 22:19; Exodus 12:13, 14, 17-21, 43; Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18)

Christ gave clear instructions to the Church on the Lord’s Supper. Just as it was with the instructions on the Passover. These instructions are to guide believers from errors that could be damnable to their souls. It is also to ensure that

everything is done as commanded by the Lord and to avoid human adulteration.

Question 3: *What are the emblems to be used when observing the Lord's Supper?*

Like the Passover whose emblems are the blood of a lamb and unleavened bread (bread baked without yeast), the emblems for the Lord's Supper are (1) unleavened bread - this is bread without yeast. **"And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body"** (Mark 14:22).

(2) The fruit of the vine. **"Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God"** (Mark 14:25). The bread represents Christ's body **"which is broken for you"**; and fruit of the vine represents Christ's blood **"which is shed for many"**. In observing the Lord's Supper, the church should make effort to use the right emblems as stipulated in the New Testament.

Question 4: *What are other vital instructions to be observed during the Lord's Supper services?*

The ordinance of the Lord's Supper is not to be done in a haphazard way. Many churches today are not careful when they observe the Lord's Supper. Although, we can take it as often as possible, it should not be taken with disrespect. The act of taking it as if we have no food to eat at home is dishonoring to God. There are churches that also command their members to take it in their various homes. This is an error. **"When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? Or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not"** (1 Corinthians 11:20-22). Care should also be taken to do everything as recorded in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. Every believer must endeavor to participate in the Lord's Supper.

SOLEMN IMPLICATIONS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER:
(Exodus 12:13, 27; Numbers 9:13; 1 Corinthians 11:29-32;
Revelation 19:7-9)

The feast of the Passover was celebrated with joy and great ecstasy by the Jews. This was because it made Israel remember the mercy and power of God towards them. Also, the Lord's Supper should be celebrated by the New Testament believers with great joy and gladness of heart. This does not only remind us of Jesus, the Lamb of God, who died for our sins; it also reminds us of His blood which was shed to make us justified before God and set us free from bondage. It also affords believers opportunity to prepare themselves for the rapture.

Question 5: *What should be our attitude when observing the Lord's Supper?*

The time of taking the Lord's Supper should be a time of sober reflection of the merciful act of Christ towards mankind. It is a time to think of the spotless "**Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world**": the One that knew no sin, but died for the condemned sinful world. It should be a time to think on the wonders of His love. It should be a time for us to weigh our spiritual standing in Christ. It should also be a time to assess our readiness for the rapture of the saints. It should be a time for us to discern the body of Christ. The Church is the body of Christ. During the Lord's Supper, real Christians are known. When the emblems representing Christ body and blood are taken, it leads to spiritual refreshment and re-vitalization of believers. Divine strength and power are received when taking the Lord's Supper. Healing and notable miracles also take place while taking the Lord's Supper. Due to these benefits, some churches misapply the Lord's Supper. They apply it as a means for members to receive healing and other miracles without deep consideration for partakers to be free from defilement.

Question 6: *What are the consequences of taking the Lord's Supper unworthily?*

There are great consequences of taking the Lord's Supper unworthily. "**For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily,**

eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (1 Corinthians 11:29). **"For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep"** (1 Corinthians 11:30). It leads to weakness, sickness and death. Heavenly minded Christian youths should not be afraid to take the Lord's Supper for these reasons. In the Old Testament observance of the Passover, anyone who refused to participate deliberately is to be cut off from the congregation of the people of God. The injunction for youths is, **"let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup"** (1 Corinthians 11:28). There are some youths who are not born again that also damn this consequence of eating unworthily. Disobedience will always attract a just recompense of reward. Beware! **"And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come"** (1 Corinthians 11:34).

Question 7: What should sinning youths do to participate in the Lord's Supper?

The only way sinning boys and girls can participate in the Lord's Supper is to be born again. They must urgently repent from sin and allow Christ to be their Savior and Lord.

LESSON 623

PATTERN OF SCRIPTURAL GODLINESS

MEMORY VERSE: *“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity”* (1 Timothy 4:12).

TEXT: Titus 2:7-10

Titus was the pastor in Crete, appointed by Paul the apostle. His duty was to **“set in order the things that are wanting”** (Titus 1:4, 5). Right from chapter one, Paul had spent time to instruct Titus on how the church should be administered. This, he was to do by preaching sound doctrine (Titus 2:1). Also, Titus was admonished to go beyond preaching sound doctrine and practice what he preached. As the pastor, he was to be in the fore-front of showing himself a pattern of good works. The messenger of the word must not live contrary to his message, lest the hearers remain in their state of moral disorder and spiritual lack for which he was appointed to take care.

Question 1: *What is the mission of Christian youths in the schools and community today?*

After conversion, believers are left in the world to reflect the light of Christ in the world. **“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”** (Matthew 5:14,16). Christian youths should endeavor to show Christ to the world of sinful youths everywhere. They must strive to have positive influence, not just by preaching the gospel, but by living such radiant and exemplary lives that will convince gainsaying youths of the power and reality of the grace of God. The world is waiting for us to prove what we profess or preach by the lives we live. Therefore, we must let others see Jesus in us and be like a lily in the mire.

FAULTLESS EXAMPLE OF GODLY YOUTHS (Titus 2:7, 8; 1 Peter 2:21-23; Matthew 5:13-16; Acts 11:26; Daniel 6:1-4, 22; Philippians 2:14-16; 3:17).

“In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing incorruptness, gravity, sincerity” (Titus 2:7). The Scripture has not left us in doubt as to how a believer should pattern his life. Our text portrays a believer as a pattern of good works.

Question 2: *What is a pattern?*

A pattern is an excellent model or example worthy to emulate. Christ, our perfect pattern (example) has set the example for us to follow. He lived a godly life that no fault was found in Him. He had positive and godly influence upon all who related with Him. People saw His works and confessed, **“Saying, he hath done all things well”** (Mark 7:37). When He was in the world, He went about doing good (Acts 10:38). **“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not: but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously”** (1Peter 2:21-23).

Question 3: *Mention some believers in the Bible who were good examples to others.*

“Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting” (1 Timothy 1:16). We have young people like Joseph (Genesis 39:9), Ruth (Ruth 3:10, 11), Samuel (1 Samuel 2:26), Esther (Esther 2:7-11, 15-17), Daniel (Daniel 6:4), Philip’s daughters (Acts 21:8, 9) and Timothy (Philippians 2:19-24) who were challenging examples in their time. A Christian youth must be a godly pattern among other youths in his school and community. He must not follow the multitude to do evil (Exodus 23:2) but must strive to have good influence on his peers.

Believers in the early church lived Christ-like lives to the point that people who saw them referred to them as Christians (Acts 11:26). To the Corinthian believers, Paul said: **“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ”**. Christian youths are to follow the scriptural examples of their leaders and not pattern their lives after

“superstars” in the world. The Thessalonian Christians also followed the scriptural pattern of Paul the apostle as their mentor. **“And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost”** (1Thessalonians 1:6). They also became faultless examples to their community, **“so that ye were examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia”** (1 Thessalonians 1:7).

Question 4: *What is the effect of living contrary to the gospel message?*

Living contrary to what we profess or preach will cancel the gospel message and hinder the salvation of sinning youths. It can also give room for sinning youths to gainsay or even blaspheme the word of God. Our conduct must be that of **“sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you. Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ”** (Titus 2:8; 1Peter 3:16).

All men have sinned and come short of the glory of God. No youth can by himself live a faultless or godly life. It takes grace to live a Christ-like life. Genuine experience of salvation is the bedrock upon which godliness rests. Sinners must therefore repent and be born again. **“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world”** (Titus 2:11,12).

FRUIT OF OBEDIENCE IN GRACIOUS YOUTHS (Titus 2:9; Colossians 3:20-25; 1 Peter 1:14, 15; Ephesians 6:18).

Obedience is one of the greatest marks of a truly converted youth. This is one feature that puts a difference between a child of God and other youths (Ephesians 6:1, 2). God’s children are referred to in Scripture as **“obedient children”** (1 Peter 1: 14) because they follow the pattern of Christ’s obedience to the heavenly Father (Hebrews 5:8, 9). On the other hand, sinning youths are referred to in Scripture as **“the children of disobedience”** (Ephesians 2:2). The grace of God in a Christian youth makes it possible for him

to obey the word of God even when such demand is not convenient to the human nature.

“Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters and to please them well in all things: not answering again” (Titus 2:9). Servants are here enjoined to be scripturally submissive to their masters. They are to please them well in all things. We are all servants of Christ. As a servant is under his master, so are youths under their parents. Youths must obey their parents **“and please them well in all things; not answering again”**. Christian youths must not be like unconverted youths who talk back to their parents, masters or teachers when corrected or rebuked. To believing youths, the Lord commands: **“Do all things without murmuring and disputing: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world”** (Philippians 2:14-15).

As Christian youths, our obedience must be scriptural, practical and prompt as a pattern for other youths to emulate. This was the case with the Roman Christians of whom Paul affirmed. **“For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil”** (Romans 16:19). Christian youths must be obedient to the Lord and His word, leadership in the Church, parents, teachers, and constituted authority.

Question 5: *What must a Christian youth do if what he is called to obey contradicts the word of God?*

“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right” (Ephesians 5:21; 6:1). Our obedience must be scriptural. If what we are called to do contradicts God’s word, we must stand on the word of God. God will be happy when youths are obedient and submissive to scriptural directives.

FAITHFULNESS OF GLORIOUS YOUTHS (Titus 2:7-10, Ephesians 4:17-28; 1 Peter 2:11, 12; Romans 12:17).

“Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things” (Titus 2:10).

Question 6: *What is fidelity?*

Fidelity is the quality of trustworthiness, faithfulness, loyalty and reliability. This is a quality that can be fully expressed out of a gracious heart. The grace of God makes a difference in the life and conduct of a truly converted youth. A questionable character and dishonest conduct contradict our Christian profession. Christian youths must demonstrate the quality of fidelity **“that they may adorn the doctrine of God our savior in all things”** (Titus 2:10). Christian youths who preach to other youths in the school and community must endeavor to live honestly, be trustworthy, truthful and righteous both in private and public. **“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”** (2 Corinthians 5:17).

LESSON 624

SOWING AND REAPING

MEMORY VERSE: *“But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully”* (2 Corinthians 9:6).

TEXT: 2 Corinthians 9:1-15.

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Galatians 6:7). The teaching of the Scriptures on sowing and reaping is clear. If you sow, you will reap. If you give to God, you will reap not the exact amount of what you have given, but more. Malachi puts it in another way, **“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it”** (Malachi 3: 10).

Sowing can be illustrated with a farmer who gets seeds to plant on his farm. The act of planting the seed is called sowing, while the act of harvesting what has been sown is called reaping. In the Scriptures, sowing and reaping is used to explain how we give to and get from God.

EXHORTATION TO SOWING AND REAPING (2 Corinthians 9:1–5; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Proverbs 11:24, 25; 2 Corinthians 8:1–7; Hosea 10:12)

“Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness” (2 Corinthians 9:5).

Paul, the apostle, here motivated and exhorted the Corinthian church to give towards the work of God. This underscores the need for every believer to be involved in giving towards the service of the Lord. God blesses both our manner and motive of giving. Giving should not be done reluctantly, but cheerfully. It is one of the greatest

challenges of the Christian life and one of the greatest privileges that we enjoy as believers. However, many are yet to enjoy the great blessings that come from giving because of how they give. The church often runs short of money because of lack of giving on the part of the members. Church projects and evangelistic outreaches are often abandoned, delayed or hindered as a result of lack of funds. Why is it so? It is because many are yet to understand Bible teaching on stewardship and biblical principles of giving. Lack of money is not the problem but lack of clear understanding of our responsibilities as stewards of God's money.

Ministers of the gospel who have surrendered their lives for the spiritual benefits of members of the Church should be supported. The missionary outreaches of the Church should also be supported. This can only be possible if we give heartily and continuously. A proper estimate of the benefits that we enjoy from a faithful ministry and true Bible Church should propel us to give cheerfully. The only way of showing appreciation for what God is doing in and through the church is to give sacrificially, cheerfully and consistently towards the progress of His work. According to our text, our giving should be characterized by bountifulness. Giving should be done willingly with an open and generous heart.

Question 1: *What are the conditions for giving and to what extent can a believer give?*

Giving is not measured by the amount of money we give. The Macedonia believers, in spite of their poverty, gave to the Lord (2 Corinthians 8:2). There are cases of individuals who made pledges to God without really knowing how to fulfill the pledges but soon found that God gave abundantly above what they had pledged and they were able to pay their pledges. God is faithful; and giving is a venture of faith. The Bible says, **“Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come”** (1 Corinthians 16:2). Does God expect a wealthy believer to pay his tithe? How about those who have little or no money? The unchanging word of God is the same for all and sundry: **“Let every one of you lay by him in**

store...” Whoever you are and whatever your position, make conscious efforts to always pay your tithes promptly. Those who are poor are not exempted from giving and the rich also should make conscious efforts to give. We should all give.

Question 2: *What is the most important thing you can give to God and why should it be given first before anything else?*

For God to receive your tithe and offering, you must first have given your life to Him. If you are a sinner or backslider, you must repent of your sins, confess them to God, forsake them and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, otherwise the Lord will not delight in your giving and He will not reward you (Micah 6:8). God loves your soul more than your substance. He does not take delight in the sacrifice of fools. Saul believed more in sacrifice than in obedience to God’s word and he lost everything including his life. **“And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams”** (1 Samuel 15:22). Offerings and tithes of sinners are abomination to the Lord. Sinners need to first give their lives to God; then, they can give their substance to the greatest Giver.

THE SECRET OF PROSPERITY (2 Corinthians 9:6, 7; Luke 6:38; Acts 20:35; Deuteronomy 28:1-6; Malachi 3:9, 10)

“But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully” (verse 6). In the Bible and in contemporary times, there are inspiring testimonies of people who have been blessed as a result of giving unto God. The practice of tithing and offering is more than a duty that one does under compulsion. A business enterprise does not expect the bank to pay interest on money that was not deposited with it. Yet, some Christians expect God to bless them financially when they are not committed to Him financially. Many youths, today, sing “Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold”,

only to be reluctant each time they have opportunity to demonstrate their love and commitment to God in the area of giving. In the economy of God, to receive you must give. The mistake made by many youths is to want to receive without attempting to give. Many people desire and pray for prosperity but refuse to make use of the divine key to enjoying prosperity: SOWING.

As farmers who expect to reap must sow, believers who expect to reap blessings of prosperity must sow by giving to God. Paul the Apostle said “**let every one of you lay by him in store**”. No one in the membership of the church is excluded. Junior and Senior Secondary School students, ex-students, undergraduates, adults and all men are expected to give to the Lord. If we sow, we shall all reap. Giving is like investing in God’s bank and it is, indeed, a spiritual sacrifice that brings fruit into the account of the giver. When you give to God, you reap untold blessings from Him.

Although God is in heaven, He works actively here on earth. You may not see Him physically, but you know that the work of the gospel is His major concern on earth. The local church or Christian ministry is likened to the store house in the Old Testament. We can gladden the heart of God today by entering into partnership with Him and giving our tithes and offerings regularly so that there can be meat in His house. Evangelistic crusades, Christian literatures (books and tracts, etc.), school fellowships, Success Camps, Church projects and other evangelistic activities are carried out by the Church. God will not send funds from heaven in order to advance His cause on earth. He expects His people to play the role of His partners on earth. He rewards those who are faithful. You must obey the word of God if you want Him to prosper you.

Question 3: *In what ways can one give to God?*

Although there is economic depression and it may be difficult to get all we need sometimes, God still showers prosperity on those who keep to the divine blueprints for financial prosperity. In the Scriptures, prosperity, wealth and abundance are promised to the obedient (Deuteronomy 28:1, 2). What a blessing! Youths can give to the Lord from

their pocket money, gifts, time, and talent and in several other ways. Just as God will bless the obedient, the word of God clearly reserves curses for the disobedient (Deuteronomy 28:15; Malachi 3:9). To prosper financially, you must obey the word of God on giving or else you suffer for not being obedient.

Question 4: *Why is it necessary to give bountifully to God?*

God's material and financial assets have been put in the believer's charge and he is called to give out of them to the progress of God's work on earth. This kind of giving is over and above the tithe. All believers must cultivate the habit of giving. Jesus said, "**It is more blessed to give than to receive**". One does not get into prosperity by hoarding. Many saints are incurring debts and finding it difficult to be balanced financially because of their failure to give. Many youths also find it difficult to get gifts and support because whenever they have, they fail to sow by giving to the Lord and others (Proverbs 11:24,25).

BENEFITS OF SOWING AND REAPING (2 Corinthians 9:8–15; Malachi 3:10–12; Luke 6:38)

Question 5: *Explain the law of sowing and reaping.*

Liberal and cheerful giving though forgotten by the giver who may not let his left hand know what his right hand is doing, is never forgotten by God. Those who give cheerfully will reap abundant fruits. Short-sighted individuals always feel that giving means losing and that saving in the bank or some other way means gaining. But the Bible says "**There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty**" (Proverbs 11:24). Anyone who gives will get; those who sow little will reap little. It becomes clear, therefore, that in the providence of God, liberality in giving is the way to prosperity.

Other benefits of giving include being loved by God (2 Corinthians 9:7). Also, the Pastor and other ministers of God will glorify God for your liberality and their prayers for you will bring great blessings (2 Corinthians 9: 13, 14). God will bless you materially when you give to Him. He

will also bless you spiritually. **“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: ... Being enriched in everything to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God”** (2 Corinthians 9:8, 11).

If God expects you to give, then you need to give priority to giving to Him. You must cultivate the habit of giving to God first (Proverbs 3: 9, 10). God expects you to give the first fruits of your income or gain to Him. In practical terms, that means you give to God before you start spending what God has given to you. Many people who are convinced and are willing to give often fail to pay their tithe and offering. This is because they often want to delay their giving without knowing that they are also delaying their benefits and rewards. Unfortunately, they end up spending these monies on some other needs without fulfilling their obligation to God. You should give to God first before doing any other thing. Remember that what you sow is what you reap. Give to the Lord and in so doing, plant a seed so that He can bless it and multiply it back to you many times. Finally, expect a miracle, believe that the windows of heaven will be opened and God will pour blessings of prosperity on you. Have you ever heard of a farmer who labored tirelessly but refused to gather the proceeds at harvest time? That will be strange. As you give, expect God to give you. If you desire to give and you are not born again, why not give your life to Christ this moment. This will make you qualify to give and reap the blessings from giving to the Lord.

LESSON 625

DIVINE TEST FOR GIDEON'S ARMY

Memory Verse: "So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink" (Judges 7:5).

TEXT: Judges 7:1-15

As Gideon's army was set to confront their enemies in battle, God mandated the army to be tested. **"And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me"** (verse 2). The reason for this test was to ensure that Israel ascribed the victory in the battle to God and not to the strength of Israel's army. Therefore, Gideon's army gathered together early in the morning in response to God's command and they displayed a unique characteristic of soldiers. God also recommended the condition in which Gideon and his army will triumph over their enemies. God took Gideon to the Midianites at night to allay any fear of defeat that might have sprung up in him. God is always with us in battle and will surely grant us victory.

Christian youths should know that life is full of battles. From the time of old till this present time, all the saints have been having their good shares of life's battle. Our father Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the prophets, the apostles, and the early church all fought the good fight of faith. Therefore, Christian youths should not see it strange whenever they are passing through life's troubles. Apostle Paul made it clear that **"we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God"** (Acts 14:22). All we need to do is trust the Lord and obey His instructions and victory shall be ours.

DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER OF GIDEON'S ARMY

(Judges 7:1; 9:32; Joshua 3:1; Psalm 63:1; 101:8; Proverbs 8:17; Isaiah 37:36; Jeremiah 7:25; John 8:2)

“Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley” (verse 1). Gideon and his army rose up early in readiness for battle. Gideon understood how God works: that He cherishes prompt obedience to His command; that winning a battle requires the application of God’s mode of operation. Therefore, they moved close to the battle field beside Harod while the Midianites pitched on the north side. Gideon and his army were bold to face their enemies. They came very close to them, to face the battle. This is a characteristic of valiancy and not cowardice. Gideon’s action reflected the level of his confidence and courage. He did not fear the longtime foe with record of victory over Israel for some years now. He believed that with God on his side, victory was sure. Youths should follow the example of Gideon.

Question 1: *What are some of the ways some Christian youths approach life’s battles?*

There are many ways Christian youths approach life’s battles. (1) Some youths shy away from problem by doing nothing to find solution to them. They easily give up and accept it as their fate. That was the case of Jabez until he realized and prayed to God. What seemed to be permanent problem in his life was removed and he later became more honorable than his fellows. (2) Other youths blame another person for their misfortune. They do not know that challenges are part of life and that they can overcome if proper action is taken to surmount it. Instead of blaming your parents, teachers, or any other person for your problem, do something by going to God in prayer for direction and solution. (3) There are youths who specialize in murmuring and complaining. Instead of manifesting faith, they murmur against leaders and authorities. They have forgotten that no one ever gets out of problem by complaining or murmuring. What makes one to join the

heroes of faith is the ability to trust God, pray through, remain faithful to God and His word till victory is achieved.

Question 2: What is the significance of early response to God's commands?

We learnt from the action of Gideon and his army that prompt obedience to God's command is very important. Whenever His message comes to sinning youths, they should not spurn the message of salvation. They should not even delay to heed the call of the Savior. Doing otherwise gives room for the devil to come and steal the word of God and prevent it from bearing fruit in their lives. Apart from salvation, Christian youths should cultivate the habit of punctuality. They should be punctual to school and church meetings. Going early to school and church makes one to be composed for the day's work at school and God's blessings in the church. Our Lord and Savior Jesus practiced rising up early while on earth. **"And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed"** (Mark 1:35). That made Him to be able to combat every problem brought to Him. This gave Him the opportunity to prepare Himself personally for victory in every area of His life and ministry. Therefore, serious-minded youth should begin to practice rising up early to pray, read their Bible and study their books. The victory of Gideon started when he rose up early with his army to discharge his duty. As we obey today, we shall be triumphant.

DIVINE CONDITION FOR VICTORY (Judges 7: 2-7; Deuteronomy 20:8; 1 Corinthians 1: 28, 29; 2 Corinthians 4:7; Joshua 6:1-5)

"And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me" (verse 2). Gideon obeyed God's instruction even when it looked foolish humanly speaking to do so. He did not see it impossible to win a battle with few men as long as God was with them. How do we handle our own problems? There are believers who are faced with life's battles who attempt to use human wisdom as means of obtaining victory.

Rather than having the needed victory, it compounds the problems. This is why some believers are living a defeated life today. We should imbibe the word of God and follow divine instructions for victory. We must learn to take our burdens to the Lord in prayer and abide in the secret place of the most High to secure victory.

Question 3: *Why did God ask Gideon to reduce his army?*

God did not want Israel to become proud after the victory has been won. He does not want anyone to share His glory with Him. He knows the thoughts of man's heart. He perceived that Israel will glory in their numerical strength if they were allowed to fight with that number. This also gives reason why many of us have not experienced breakthrough in life. Some of us seek solution to our problems in our own way. There are people that give themselves to fasting and prayer for days as if it is by their strength they would overcome. Though no one can have victory and breakthrough in life without prayer, the act of bragging and boasting is what God frowns at.

There are brethren with lack of proper knowledge of the Scripture that make a boast of their prayer life and what they have achieved as if it occurs by their personal efforts. There are also youths who move from one church to the other, from one so-called prophet to the other in an attempt to have their problems solved. Many youths have run into bigger problems through this. God is a loving Father and promised, **"I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it"** (Psalm 81:10). God also discovered that some of the soldiers were fearful and would pose a problem to Gideon when they get into the battle. And greater percentage of his army falls into this category. God knows the best. He has reason for asking us to do whatever He says we should do.

God gave Gideon instruction on how the reduction would be done. **"Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand"** (verse 3). Because many

of them were fearful, they were asked to go back home after the proclamation. How would they have conquered if allowed to go along with them to battle? They would have weakened the hands of those that were courageous. Only iron can sharpen iron. And fear is a torment that makes someone unfit for victory or to receive from the Lord. There are youths who are dead spiritually and stagnated in their spiritual growth due to fear. They are not making spiritual progress due to fear of their unbelieving parents or guardians who threaten them during persecution. They still fear their sin partners and would not want to continue in the faith. It is the right time for such youths to change! They should replace their garment of fear with the shield of faith. At the end, only 300 of Gideon's army passed the test. And by them, God promised Israel victory. **“And the LORD said unto Gideon, by the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand”** (verse 7). When the test of faith comes to you, will you pass?

DIVINE CONFIRMATION OF VICTORY OF GIDEON'S ARMY (Judges 7: 8-15; Job 33:15; 1 Kings 3:5; Acts 20:7; Joel 1:13; Luke 14:31,32)

Whenever God is set to deliver His people, He does it perfectly. Also, whenever He leads, it is always very clear and sure. God who knows the thoughts of the heart perceived that Gideon had element of doubt after reducing his army. The strength of a nation's army sometimes gives military advantage over their opponents. May be Gideon, as a human being, was thinking on this. But God, willing to dispel his fear, asked him to go down at night to the host of the Midianite to listen to the conversation between a Midianites and an Amalekite. **“And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along. And his fellow answered and said, this is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host”** (verse

13, 14). This is to enable him to confidently approach the battle without any panic.

Question 4: *Mention Bible characters who received God's revelation and instruction through night vision?*

Jacob had a revelation from God in the night that he should not be afraid to go down to Egypt, that He will bless him there and make him great (Genesis 46:2,3). Another person God spoke with at night was Abimelech, when he took Abraham's wife. God instructed him to restore her to Abraham (Genesis 20:3, 4). King Solomon also had a vision from the Lord in the night that he should ask whatever he wanted and his request for wisdom was granted (1 Kings 3:5). In the New Testament, God spoke to Joseph, the espoused husband of Mary the mother of Jesus Christ, not to be afraid to take her to wife because the child in her womb was of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:20,21).

God still gives revelation to His children today. Testimonies abound of those that God, by revelation, has led in choice of a life partner, career, business, etc.

LESSON 626

GIDEON DEFEATS THE MIDIANITES

Memory Verse: *“And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the LORD set every man’s sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host: and the host fled to Bethshittah in Zererath, and to the border of Abelmeholah, unto Tabbath”* (Judges 7:22).

TEXT: Judges 7:16-25

From the last study, it has been discovered that the call and ministry of Gideon was characterized by faithfulness, obedience, consecration, selflessness and humility. He mobilized thirty-two thousand men for war at a short notice. But God told him that the men were too large so that the Excellency of His power will not be ascribed to the people (Judges 7:2). In this, we learn that God’s work can only be done by divine power and ability. Therefore, God declares that the deliverance of Israel from the Midianites was exclusively His work. Hence, He gave a test to the army of Gideon and the number was reduced to three hundred men (Judges 7:4-7).

Today’s lesson deals with the strategies and techniques Gideon used to conquer the Midianites. His plan and method were totally dependent on the Lord (verse 22). Before he revealed his strategies to his army, he was inspired by the interpretation of the dream from the enemy’s camp.

THE CHALLENGE OF FOLLOWING SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLES (Judges 7:16-18; 1 Corinthians 11:1; 4:16; Ephesians 5:1,2; Isaiah 58:1)

“And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man’s hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers” (verse 16). To accomplish his God-sent mission, Gideon divided the three hundred men into three groups. This is referred to as division of labor which is a system of

breaking down work into smaller parts to be handled by different people. The work of God cannot be performed by a single person. It should be divided into small units for others to participate in and for easy operations. This will allow everyone to be involved.

Question 1: *What can youths learn from the division of Gideon's army into three groups?*

The Youth Section is structured into Deeper Life Schools Outreach (DLSO) and Youth Home Success Fellowship (YHSF). These two arms are used to reach youths in the schools and our communities for Christ with the gospel. Therefore, every student should make it a duty to attend the school fellowship as well as the home fellowship for a balanced spiritual and academic development and growth. In our text, Gideon, as the leader of the army did not only plan the work but also provided materials for it.

Question 2: *Mention some materials provided by the Church to evangelize the youths.*

“The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it” (Psalm 68:11). Some of the materials provided by the church to reach youths with the gospel include Youth Life magazine, gospel tracts for youths, messages on DVD/CD/MP3 for youths, Higher Everyday, etc. It is every member's responsibility to use these materials prayerfully to reach the target audience with the gospel.

“And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do” (verse 17). Here, Gideon demonstrated a good scriptural example for the people to follow. He was not like the Scribes and Pharisees who will not practice what they teach. **“Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with**

one of their fingers” (Matthew 23:1-4). As young people, the Scripture challenges us to follow godly examples in everything we do. We are to follow godly examples of our parents and leaders and not worldly stars who do not know the Lord. Paul the apostle also challenged his followers the same way. **“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ”** (1 Corinthians 11:1).

“When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon” (verse 18). In Scripture, blowing of trumpets is likened to proclaiming the gospel message. **“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins”** (Isaiah 58:1). Let us therefore seek the Lord for the power of the Spirit of God to spread the gospel effectively. We must be like Paul the apostle who said: **“Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision”** (Acts 26:19).

THE STEADFAST ARMY OF GOD (Judges 7:19-23; Nehemiah 4:12-23; 2 Chronicles 20:14-17,22-24; 2 Timothy 2:1-5; 4:1-5; 1 Corinthians 4:1,2)

“So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands” (verse 19). The army which Gideon led was truly tested and trained by God. The time Gideon called on them to duty was **“in the beginning of the middle watch”** which suppose be a time of rest. Yet they sacrifice it for the service of God. What a challenge!

Question 3: *What are the qualities we can learn from Gideon’s army?*

Gideon’s army challenge us to serve God today. They were consecrated, fearless, steadfast, determined, focused, dependable, and faithful and had faith in God for victory. Today, Gideon’s army is being remembered for their sacrificial service to God. What will you be remembered for? A song writer challenges us thus:

*Is your life a channel of blessing?
Is the love of God flowing thro' you?
Are you telling the lost of the Savior?
Are you ready His service to do?*

“And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, the sword of the LORD, and of Gideon” (verse 20). When Gideon and the one hundred men blew the trumpets, the other two hundred men did the same. This is co-operation and unity in the service of the Lord. No wonder, there was great victory and success. This army used all their strength to serve the Lord. Our text says that they held the lamps in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands to blow therewith. This was the same thing Nehemiah and his men did when the walls of Jerusalem were built (Nehemiah 4:12-23). The service of the Lord requires our time, talents and treasures. We must spend our strength and energy to serve the Lord. Jesus Christ is our perfect Example. He said: **“I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world”** (John 9:4, 5).

“And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the LORD set every man’s sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host: and the host fled to Bethshittah in Zererath, and to the border of Abelmeholah, unto Tabbath” (verse 22). The importance of faith in God in Christian service cannot be over looked. Blowing the trumpets alone without faith in the ability of God will not bring victory. It was their faith in God that made **“the LORD set every man’s sword against his fellow”**. Thus, through the Spirit-revealed strategy, in a single stroke, the Midianites were discomfited and rooted out. Today, when the people of God unite in prayer of faith and decree, all the **“Midianites”** in our lives will be rooted out.

CALL TO A FAITHFUL SERVICE FOR GOD (Judges 7:24, 25; 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2)

“And Gideon sent messengers throughout all mount Ephraim, saying, Come down against the Midianites,

and take before them the waters unto Bethbarah and Jordan. Then all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and took the waters unto Bethbarah and Jordan. And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and they slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the winepress of Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side Jordan” (verse 24,25). Gideon, in his pursuit of the Midianites, sought for the support of Ephraim to stop them from escaping through the passage of Jordan. The men of Ephraim acted accordingly and **“took the waters unto Bethbarah and Jordan”**. The waters, here, seem to mean a number of streams which run from the hill country of Ephraim into Jordan and which had to be crossed by the Midianites before they could reach the Jordan passage. The Ephraimites deployed themselves along the rivers so that the enemies who thought they were clean escaped still fell into their hands and were slain. Thus, did Gideon’s little band of three hundred soldiers proved to be God’s instrument in initiating the deliverance of Israel from seven years of cruel servitude to Midian. When we truly believe God to fight our battle, we shall boldly say: **“Through thee will we push down our enemies: through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us. For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me. But thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to shame that hated us”** (Psalms 44:5-7).

LESSON 627

GIDEON'S CONQUEST OF ISRAEL'S ENEMIES

Memory Verse: *“For the Lord your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you”* (Deuteronomy 20:4).

TEXT: Judges 8:1-21

The event in this passage is a follow-up to what happened in the previous chapter. There, we have seen how the Lord helped Gideon to resize his army by excusing those who were fearful among them. Then the Lord encouraged him to launch an attack. But he was afraid until one of the Midianites had a dream as he made a move to spy out the enemies' camp. After the assurance, he came to organize his army of three hundred men for the war. As the army of Israel approached the Midianites' camp, their enemies cried and fled (Judges 7:21). Then Gideon sent for the people of Ephraim to help in the pursuit. They did that and had victory to an extent. But the battle still raged on because the kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna had fled.

After the defeat of the Midianites, the people of Ephraim blamed Gideon for not calling on them earlier for the battle. The soft answer of Gideon calmed their anger. Gideon was a focused soldier. He did not allow Ephraim's action to hinder them from pursuing the enemies. This helped them to be committed to the fight – though fainting yet pursuing.

SOFT RESPONSE TO HARSH OPPOSERS (Judges 8:1-3; Proverbs 15:1,2,4; Philippians 2:3,4; 1Corinthians 3:5-8; Colossians 4:6)

“And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide with him sharply” (verse 1). The men of Ephraim were upset with Gideon for not getting them involved earlier. No doubt, they wanted to be a part of the success story. They

felt neglected and not respected. Then they confronted him, **“Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not”**. His response is worth our emulation. **“And he said unto them, what have I done now in comparison of you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?”** (Verse 2). In his response, he told them, comparing yourself to me is of no use because you have achieved a lot more than all I have been doing. He referred to his own effort in the war as **“the vintage of Abiezer”**, that is the main harvest. On the other hand, he referred to the effort of the people of Ephraim as **“the gleaning of the grapes”**. What he meant was that, though they came to the scene much later, they had done much more. They had captured and slain the princes of Midian. He put a very good construction on the little they did. The result was that, **“...their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that”** (verse 3).

Question 1: *What can we learn from the response of Gideon to his accusers?*

The first thing we see is that his response was a soft one to meet those who came with query. **“Soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger”** (Proverbs 15:1). It is better that we have a very gentle way of responding to those who approach us roughly. Our soft response can turn their wrath away. We can also see that he was self-effacing. He would not make himself look more superior to all that came to help in the war. When we have people that we are studying together or working together in the church, though they may not be doing so much as we have done in some areas, we should focus our commendations on the area where they have done better than us. We should not be focusing or talking more on what we do better than others. The Bible says, **“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”** (Philippians 2:3, 4).

Apart from Gideon, another man in the Bible that showed the attitude of self-effacing in the heat of conflict was Paul the apostle. The Corinthian church was having preference

for preachers and it was so pronounced that “...one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos...” (1Corinthians 3:4). No doubt, he had done so much than Apollos but for peace and unity to reign and for all opposing parties to lay down their arms, he said, “**Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos...I have planted, Apollos watered... So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase**” (1 Corinthians 3:5-7). He did not emphasize his ability at the expense of Apollos’ before the people who respected him.

Question 2: *What should be our attitude when we are recounting our successes and achievements?*

When we have good things to say about our life or achievement amidst the brethren, we should speak with humility so that others do not feel inferior. We should attribute it to God’s grace (1Corinthians 15:10). Another lesson from Gideon was that he settled the misunderstanding with Ephraim before proceeding to the battle. That is what the Bible commands. Regardless of how much we think we want to do for God, the moment we have knowledge that someone has something against us, we should put all activities on hold and make peace. “**Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift**” (Matthew 5:23, 24).

STEADFASTNESS AND ENDURANCE THAT BRING VICTORY (Judges 8:4-17; 2 Samuel 23:9, 10; 2 Timothy 2:3; 4:5; Romans 12:17-21)

“**Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over, he, and the three hundred men that were with him, faint, yet pursuing them**” (verse 4).

Question 3: *What should be our attitude when life challenges become more overwhelming?*

They were already tired yet kept pursuing their enemies. This kind of steadfastness, longsuffering and endurance characterized Eleazar, the son of Dodo the Ahohite. He was a soldier in David’s army. He fought till his hand was

weary but clave to the sword. The result was victory. As soldiers of the Lord, we are to endure hardness in the fight for the truth and the salvation of sinners. Even if it means standing alone, we should dare to do so. The Bible says that we shall reap if we faint not. Gideon thought he had seen an opportunity for support. **“And he said unto the men of Succoth, Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me; for they be faint, and I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian”** (verse 5). Unfortunately, **“the princes of Succoth said, Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thine army?”** (Verse 6). They despised him and had doubt in his ability. Hence, they refused to help or support him. **“And he went up thence to Penuel, and spake unto them likewise: and the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered him”** (verse 8). Also, the people of Penuel refused to help them too because they doubted the possibility of his success. Their reason might be that they considered that he was pursuing great kings which had thousands of soldiers with just three hundred men. It was unknown to them that the Lord was with Gideon. We can see callousness in their attitude.

Question 4: Should we help people who seek our help to do something good when we are not sure they would succeed at it?

When any of the people of God request for our help in other to do some legitimate things, we should encourage them with our support wherever we can. If a friend asks for extra time to understand a concept that was taught in the class, we should not write them off as people who failed. If a student asks for money from an instructor to register for an exam, we should burry our fears in their ability to succeed and support them.

In response to their callous behavior, **“Gideon said, Therefore when the LORD hath delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into mine hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers ... And he spake also unto the men of Penuel, saying, When I come again in peace, I will break down this**

tower” (verses 7,9). He actually conquered. **“Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and their hosts with them ...And Gideon went up by the way of them that dwelt in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and smote the host: for the host was secure”** (verses 10,11). He captured those kings as they tried to escape **“...and discomfited all the host”** (verse 12).

As Gideon returned from the battle, he **“caught a young man of the men of Succoth, and enquired of him: and he described unto him the princes of Succoth, and the elders thereof, even threescore and seventeen men”** (verses 13, 14). This, no doubt, was a traitor to Succoth. He was giving out sensitive information to an outsider. How much of the sensitive information about our church and the leaders do we share with people whose details we do not even know?

Question 5: What should we do to those who refuse to help us when we become successful?

Gideon took advantage of that and invaded the city. He also went to Penuel and beat down their tower as he earlier threatened. He revenged on those that did not help him. This is not a good attitude. There was no record that God told him to do so but he was the one who said **“I will tear your flesh...I will break down this tower”**. He succeeded without their help. He should have thought that probably God did not need the help he was asking them for. When people do not help us and we succeed, we should not repay them accordingly. God may have designed that we succeed without them. Even if we feel that their help is crucial and they have failed us, we should allow God to judge them. We should not repay evil for evil but evil with good (1 Thessalonians 5:15).

SEVERE RETRIBUTION FOR HATEFUL OPPONENTS:
(Judges 8:18-21; 1:6, 7; Galatians 6:7; Matthew 25:14-30)

“Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna, What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, as thou art, so were they...And he said ... if ye had saved them alive, I would not slay you” (verses 19, 20).

Now, Gideon wants them to pay for what they had done. He said he could have spared them if they had not killed his brethren. This is to teach us that whatever a man sows that he will reap.

In order to humiliate these kings, he told his son who was a youth to kill them. It was spiteful and humiliating to make a child to slay a warrior. “...**But the youth drew not his sword: for he feared, because he was yet a youth**” (verse 20). When he saw that his child was reluctant, he “**arose, and slew Zebah and Zalmunna, and took away the ornaments that were on their camels’ necks**” (verse 21). He did not accuse him of cowardice. Even those kings told him he was asking too much from the boy when they said, “**Rise thou, and fall upon us: for as the man is, so is his strength...**” (Verse 21).

Do we find out the reason some youths fail in what we commit to their hands to do as leaders? Sometimes, they fail because we have committed too much than they can cope with into their hands. We should properly assess what responsibilities we give out to our youths and be sure it is what they can handle. Otherwise, it will be very unfair of us to begin to rebuke them for failure. If we discover we have made a mistake in the assignment, we should reassign them for effectiveness. God does not demand from us more than we can bear (1Corinthians 10:13).

LESSON 628

GIDEON DESCENDS INTO IDOLATRY

Memory Verse: “And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, even in Ophrah: and all Israel went a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house” (Judges 8:27).

TEXT: Judges 8:22-35

From our previous study, we have seen how God graciously called Gideon out of idolatry and was marvelously helped to defeat and conquer the Midianites. The commitment and consecration of Gideon to the course of the Lord pose a great challenge to us. He did not relent, neither did he stop fighting the Lord's battle even when he and the three hundred men that were with him were fainting. They kept pursuing until they won the battle (Judges 8:4). Unfortunately, Gideon, who started well descended into idolatry and brought a snare to his entire household by the request which he made. The story of Gideon in our text is that which calls for sober reflection and watchfulness on the part of New Testament believers. The Scripture says: **“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope”** (Romans 15:4).

“And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that ye would give me every man the earrings of his prey: (for they had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelite’s” (verse 24). His moral life after the wonderful victory he had over Midian is not a model for Christian youths. In this study, we shall be taking a close look at the consequences of his covetous request on his life, household and the children of Israel after his demise¹.

GIDEON'S IMPROPER DEMAND AND ITS RESULT (Judges 8:22-27; 1 Samuel 8:4-7; Hebrews 13:5; Exodus 32:1-5; 1 Corinthians 8:9-13; 10:31-33)

“Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also,

for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian” (Verse 22). Unfortunately, for the children of Israel, they gave to Gideon the honor and glory which belong to God. They ascribed the victory over Midian to Gideon saying, “Thou **has delivered us from the hand of Median.**” How soon did they forget that God was the One who called and raised Gideon to battle with the Midianites! He was the One who encouraged and emboldened Gideon when he was fearful of the battle (Judges 7:9-15). He was the One who chose the three hundred men as against the initial thirty-two thousand people who responded to fight in the battle (Judge 7:7). He was the One who empowered Gideon by His Spirit to fight victoriously (Judges 6:34). God was the One who directed the battle. **“And the three hundred men blew the trumpets, and the Lord set every man’s sword against his fellow, even throughout the entire host”**. Israel’s attitude and request for Gideon to rule over them was rather disappointing.

Question 1: *What lesson can Christian youths learn from the attitude of the children of Israel?*

We learn as Christian youths that while it is good to appreciate the grace and the gifts of God in a man, we must render all praises and glory to God alone and also acknowledge Him (not any man) as the doer of all good things. All glory is due to Him. Also, we should not give to any man God’s place in our life.

Question 2: *What was Gideon’s reaction to Israel’s request?*

“Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son’s son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian” (Judges 8:22). Gideon declined the request knowing that God is their King. Although God raised leaders like Moses, Joshua and the Judges to lead His people, they led as God’s representatives and operated under His directives. By this design, He made Israel to be different from the other nations. This was why some years later, Samuel was displeased when the children of Israel requested him to give them a king so that they could be like the other nations. **“And the Lord said unto Samuel, hearken unto**

the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: For they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them” (1Samuel 8:7). Gideon’s attitude is commendable up to this point (verse 23). Christian youths must decline from any position, honor or praise that belongs to God. We should remain humble under God even after victory over life’s challenges or success in academics.

“And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that ye would give me every man the earrings of his prey. (For they had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelite)” (verse 24). Gideon asked each person to give him the golden earrings of his prey. The people willingly gave him his request which amounted to a thousand and seven hundred shekels of gold, besides ornaments and raiment. Gideon’s demand of golden earring from each person was improper and unscriptural. He was called by God to deliver the children of Israel from the captivity of Midian and not to make a gain or merchandise of them. Asking for golden earrings is the same as demanding for payment for the service rendered.

The Scripture admonishes us to do all things as to the Lord without looking for earthly reward or man’s compensation. **“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of inheritance: For ye serve the Lord Christ”** (Colossians 3:23, 24). As Christian youths, we should not do our good deeds with the aim of being rewarded or making gain out of what we do. Rather, we should render selfless and sacrificial service for Christ’s sake. Moreover, Gideon’s action tended towards covetousness. Why was he so particular about the golden earrings of the preys? **“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee”** (Hebrews 13:5).

Question 3: Why did Gideon ask for the golden earrings and what was the consequence of this request?

Gideon made the gold into an ephod, which he placed in Ophrah, his town. All Israel polluted themselves by

worshipping it and it became a snare to Gideon and his family. Actually, Gideon, thinking to keep up the remembrance of the victory over Midian by this ephod, misled the children of Israel to their besetting sin of idol worship. By this act, they broke the very first commandment of God. Many today have been led into false worship by one wrong step of a leader. This became a trap to Gideon himself and it led to the ruin of his entire family. What an important lesson for believers and Christian youths in particular! Youths are very good at imitating those who they consider as 'heroes'.

We should therefore be mindful of the spiritual and moral implications of what we do on other Christians. Let those who claim to be strong in the faith be considerate of their actions on the weak brethren so as not to destroy their consciences and encourage them to do things that are contrary to the word of God. We must ensure **“That no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way”** (Roman 14:13). As a matter of fact, the Lord, through Paul, warns all believers, especially those who have been long in the faith to be very careful of what they allow or do so as not to mislead those who are young or weak in the faith. **“But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak”** (1Corinthians 8:9).

GIDEON’S INORDINATE DESIRE AND ITS REPERCUSSION: (Judges 8: 28-31; 1 Samuel 17:47; 1 Kings 11:1-4; Matthew 19: 4, 5)

Midian was thus subdued before the children of Israel and did not raise its head again. Surely, ours is a God of battle. He never lost and will never lose any battle. If we trust and rely on Him, He will always fight our battles until we become triumphant. Israel won the battle, not by their military might, neither by their intelligent strategies (Judges 7:1, 2, 7, 22). It was the Lord who won the battle for them. It is not by might but faith in God that wins the battles of life. Christian youths should always rely on God and trust Him that He will never fail to fight all their battles. Your challenges will all be subdued so that they will never be able to lift up their heads again. The arm of the flesh will fail and the strength of the youth will falter without faith in God (Isaiah 40:28-31).

However, it is worthy to note that Gideon, who won and defeated the Midianites, could not win the battle over his own flesh. As the lust of the eyes led him to covet all the gold earrings of their preys, so also, the lust of the flesh led him to have so many wives. This shows he lacked self-control. **“And Gideon had three score and ten sons of his body begotten: for he had many wives”** (verse 30). His inordinate desire led him to having so many wives and seventy children. Gideon’s family is not a model for believers. After exposing his family to the snare of idolatry, his love for many women made him to raise many sons who did not serve the Lord. His marital life was like that of Solomon. Gideon’s children all died in one day in the hand of their half-brother, who was the son of Gideon’s concubine (Judges 9:5). This was the repercussion of a life without temperance.

Question 4: *What is the Bible standard for Christian marriage?*

Polygamy (a man marrying more than one wife) is dangerous both on the part of the couple and their children. A polygamous home cannot experience true peace and fellowship because such system of marriage runs contrary to God’s established plan for man. Gideon and David’s families are notable examples of polygamous families to learn from. The Bible standard for Christian marriage therefore is monogamy – one man marrying only one wife in the Lord.

GIDEON’S INEVITABLE DEATH AND ISRAEL’S REACTION: (Judges 8:32-35; Ecclesiastes 3:1, 2; Hebrews 9:27; Psalm 90:9-12)

Death is inevitable. A life that begins will surely have an end. Gideon, like all his predecessors, died after living out his life on earth. Today, we are alive, but one day we shall be no more. Let us make the best use of our short time while still on earth. Sinners should repent before it is too late. Believers should live with the consciousness of eternity in view. Let your life count for eternity, knowing fully well that we shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give account of how we have spent our lives (1 Peter 4:6).

Question 5: How did Israel react to the death of Gideon?

Unfortunately, Israel stopped following the Lord immediately after Gideon died. They backslid as soon as Gideon departed. **“And it came to pass, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel turned again, and went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baalberith their god”** (verse 33). The children of Israel had no personal conviction to serve the true God. It was as if they were waiting for the exit of Gideon so as to have the freedom to go fully into idol worship. This is the same with some Christian youths who change in lifestyle and comportment once their Christian teachers, leaders, mentors or godly parents are no more with them. Others merely believe the truth at home but backslide on campus. Daniel and his three godly companions are good examples for Christian youths to emulate. They never forgot the God of Israel and His commandments even in the face of persecution and danger. Joseph did not yield to the temptation and pressure to commit immorality. He lived saintly in Egypt. Esther and Ruth equally maintained virtuous life in strange lands. But the children of Israel did not remember the goodness and mercy of the Lord toward them. They also demonstrated an ungrateful attitude towards the family of Gideon.

In summary, we learn from this study that: (i) the pride of life made Israel to desire Gideon to rule over them rather than God. They wanted to be like other nations. (ii) The lust of the eyes made Gideon to desire the earrings of all the preys which amounted to covetousness. (iii) The pride of life made him to make an ephod which he raised in Ophrah and caused both his family and all Israel to go a whoring after it. God brought him out of idolatry, but he misled Israel back to it. (iv) The lust of the flesh made him to marry so many wives and even had a concubine. This led to the utter destruction of his entire family. What a tragedy! What then shall we say to all these? **“Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted”** (1 Corinthians 10:6). **“But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lust thereof”** (Romans 13:14).

LESSON 629

THE CONSPIRACY OF ABIMELECH

Memory Verse: *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it”* (Jeremiah 17:9).

TEXT: Judges 9:1-33

Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal in our study today plotted on how he would rule the children of Israel contrary to his father’s decision. **“And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you”** (Judges 8:23). His plot and strategies to rule by all means led him to kill seventy sons of Gideon who were his brothers. This is a story of a desperate desire for power at the expense of basic reasoning and godly precepts.

Question 1: *In what ways do youths today display the attitude of Abimelech?*

In our schools and churches today, there are many people who exalt leadership position, fame and popularity more than virtuous living. People tell lies to occupy places of honor and also commit all manner of evil in order to achieve such. Even in schools today, there are many who strive to become prefect and use gifts to influence the teachers into giving them positions which they do not merit. God is interested in how we acquire any possession or position here on earth. If we do not walk in righteousness, He would be displeased with us. Our daily prayers should be: **“Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness”** (Psalm 143:10).

THE PROPOSAL AND POLLUTION OF A HYPOCRITICAL LIFE (Judges 9:1-6; 8:35; 2 Kings 12:20; Job 15:20-30; Psalm 71:4; 140:4; Proverbs 11:9; Luke 22:47, 48)

Abimelech with his deep and unrestrained desire for leadership went subtly to his mother’s brethren to commune with them saying, **“Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the men of Shechem, Whether is better for you, either that**

all the sons of Jerubbaal, *which are threescore and ten persons, reign over you, or that one reign over you? Remember also that I am your bone and your flesh*” (verse 2). His aim of asking this question was not because he was really interested in ensuring proper leadership in Israel, but had an inordinate desire. However, the people were misled by his statement thinking that he had their interest in mind. This was hypocritical.

Question 2: *How can you describe a hypocrite?*

A hypocrite is described as a person who pretends to have virtues, moral or religious beliefs, principles, etc., that he or she does not actually possess. Abimelech was a hypocrite. He had an interest in the leadership of Israel to be the judge. He was not interested in knowing what the will and desires of the Lord were concerning the leadership of Israel at this time. He worked carnally and subtly to pave his way to the top by playing on the intelligence of the people. He used emotional blackmail and tribal sentiments to woo them to his side.

Abimelech mobilized the people who also helped to facilitate his acceptance by others. His mobilization is also a point of concern as the seventy pieces of silver given to him were from the house of an idol (Baalberith). He accepted this offering from the idol and did not act like Daniel and the three Hebrew children who refused to defile themselves with the food from the idolatrous table of Nebuchadnezzar. Abimelech who walked on the path to the throne in deceit, worsened his situation by being empowered with resources from an idol house. His empowerment made him display his true color when he polluted the city by killing his brothers to prevent any challenge to his getting to the throne. **“And he went unto his father’s house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, *being threescore and ten persons, upon one stone: notwithstanding yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself*”** (verse 5). After this wicked act, Abimelech was appointed as the king by his people at the house of Millo which was like the state house.

Question 3: *What caution should believers exercise when approached by position seekers in our schools and homes?*

As believers, we should be careful when dealing with politicians, position seekers and those who come to ask for our favor. Whenever we are not sure of someone's intent, we should refuse until we seek for counsel or get more clarification. Also, as believers, whenever we see anyone pursuing an evil agenda to properly position himself in a place of leadership, we should not give our support. Evil should never be encouraged in any form by any believer.

THE PARABLE AND PAINS OF A HURTING LAD (Judges 9:7-21; Job 20:5; Proverbs 14:17; Colossians 4:6)

Israel had provoked God by their support for the mindless killing of seventy children of Gideon who had been used by God as a judge and leader among them. The only recorded opposition to the imposition of Abimelech and his wicked act was a young lad¹ called Jotham. Jotham was the youngest son of Gideon who hid himself when his brothers were killed on one stone. Even though Jotham was afraid of being killed, he reacted to the attitude of Shechem for making Abimelech king over Israel.

Question 4: *What should a believing youth do when he is faced with a group of people who tell lies or support evil doers?*

In the midst of the wicked act of Shechem and Abimelech, Jotham was bold and told the truth to the people. He was firm and told them a parable. However, He moved to a place of safety to tell them the truth. As Christian youths, we should not endanger our lives unnecessarily in trying to protect others or to tell people the truth. Jotham moved to the top of the mountain where he knew he was safe before lifting up his voice and crying out. After he finished his parable and presentation to Israel, the Bible says that **“And Jotham ran away, and fled, and went to Beer, and dwelt there, for fear of Abimelech his brother”** (verse 21). Where you are not sure of the dangers of your actions or activities, it is important that you seek for advice from your leaders.

Jotham was a wise lad who knew that the best way to express his grievances against the wicked act done against his brothers was to use a parable which would properly pass the message across. He told them the parable of the trees in search of a king. They spoke to the Olive, Fig Tree and Vine to come and lead them, but these trees were satisfied with the roles they had been appointed by God. They were contented with what they were given and did not want to be distracted from their vision. The trees then went to the Bramble as a matter of last option in their search for a leader. The bramble which is a stubborn woody weed with long thorny aching leaves is very difficult to eradicate once it has established itself. The bramble in its usual thorny style then gave the trees some strict conditions to abide by if it was to be their king. The trees could not take a right decision, they therefore submitted to the leadership of the bramble.

After telling them the story, Jotham interpreted it for them, explaining the danger in their ungodly support of the inordinate passion for position by Abimelech and his cruel murder of his brothers. In concluding his speech, Jotham left them in the hand of God and gave them an opportunity to weigh their actions. He said **“If ye then have dealt truly and sincerely with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, then rejoice ye in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you: But if not, let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech”** (verses 19, 20).

Question 5: *What lessons do we learn from Jotham’s speech?*

Jotham, though hurt, went about his words to Israel with caution. He did not allow his wounded heart to becloud his sense of reasoning. His words were sensible, straightforward and thought-provoking. No one who heard these words would say they were insulted by Jotham. Youths need to learn to avoid taking decisions based on their emotions. Also, we need to be careful on how we speak to people; raised voice, painful ungraceful words, words with

malicious intents, defiling words, argumentative and fight-provoking words should not be found among believers. Our words should be graceful and seasoned with salt (Colossians 4:6).

Also, Jotham's conditional pronouncement reminds us of the nature of God's promises. The Lord says, **"And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God...But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee"** (Deuteronomy 28:2, 15). The obedient will eat the good of the land while those who fail to be obedient will suffer. This also highlights the futility¹ in believing in eternal security. God will judge sinners who fail to repent and re-unite with God.

PERILS AND PUNISHMENT OF A HEARTLESS LEADER:

(Judges 9:22-33; Psalm 37:1-5, 9, 10; Proverbs 24:19; 29:2; Job 27:8; Proverbs 11:21; Revelation 12:11)

Evil associations may seem to be succeeding in the immediate time, but short cuts are not sure cuts. After Abimelech had reigned for three years, he and his confederates² in wickedness suffered a major blow as they dealt unfaithfully with each other. This led to accusations, counter accusations and a chain of plans against each other. Abimelech's short reign on the throne was coming to an end as the same people who fought gallantly to enthrone him have now lost confidence in him and sought for how to destroy him. Truly, how is the mighty fallen!

The kingdom became divided and God's vengeance against these workers of iniquity came to reality. The wicked will never go unpunished. All the evil he has done will be paid back in multi-fold except he repents. God is not delighted in the death of a sinner, but His interest and joy lies in everyone living a life that is pleasing to Him. The question is, how are you living your life? Are you hiding your wickedness and plots to advance yourself against others and the will of God? God wants you to repent and amend your ways, so that you can be free. **"If ye be willing**

and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it” (Isaiah 1:19, 20).

LESSON 630

WARNING AGAINST BACKSLIDING

Memory Verse: *“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12).*

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 10:1-15

Apostle Paul, in the preceding chapter, had put up a defense in favor of his apostolic right. His defense turned out to be lessons on self-denial and acceptable ministerial conduct. In this lesson, the history of the children of Israel is given as a warning to Christian youths. Apostle Paul presented to the Corinthian church an admonition and a warning so as to dissuade them from communion with idolaters and a feeling of security in any sinful habit. He sets before them the example of the Jews, the church under the Old Testament, who enjoyed great privileges. But they backslid and were punished.

The Scripture says, **“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope”** (Romans 15:4). This is to warn us so as to avoid similar mistakes and escape the divine punishment. Therefore, **“let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall”** (verse 12).

PRIVILEGES OF TRUE BELIEVERS (1 Corinthians 10:1-5; Exodus 13:21; Leviticus 26:14-42; Deuteronomy 8:11-14; Psalms 105:39; 103:2-13; Proverbs 26:11; Revelation 2:4,5; 3:2,3)

“Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea” (verse 1).

Question 1: Who are being referred to as the ‘brethren’?

The term ‘brethren’, in this context, refers to the members of the family of God who, through the new birth experience, are constantly identifying with one another in a church for spiritual fellowship. The apostle saw that many in the Corinthian church were boastful of their knowledge, gifts

and great privileges God bestowed on them. Some were also boastful of their presence in a gospel church and being the first-fruits of the Gentiles in Christ. They might have therefore thought that they needed not to be pressed to such degrees of strictness and watchfulness. To get them off this over-confidence and vain presumption, the apostle sets before them the example of the children of Israel. He told them not to be ignorant of what happened to the children of Israel on their journey to the Promised Land (Exodus 13:21). They all obtained the favor of God and passed through the Red Sea on dry ground. Yet, they fell afterward.

Question 2: *What were the privileges enjoyed by the Old Testament believers?*

Paul the apostle mentioned some of their privileges: they miraculously passed through the Red Sea (verse 1); they were overshadowed with the guiding clouds (verse 2); they were fed with manna (verse 3) and drank miraculous water from the rock (verse 4). In like manner, Christian youths are blessed with a lot of privileges: forgiveness of sins, healing from all diseases, redemption from destruction, crowning with loving kindness and tender mercies, satisfaction with good things and renewal of strength like the eagles (Psalm 103:2-5).

“But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness” (verse 5). The children of Israel were soon forgetful of the warnings and the instructions of God. Consequently, they went astray and were punished. As Christian youths, we must not be carried away by the blessings we are receiving from the Lord but rather these blessings should draw us closer to God. We should fear Him and obey His word completely.

PENALTY FOR BACKSLIDING (1 Corinthians 10:6-11; Joshua 24:20-27; 1 Kings 9:6-9; 2 Chronicles 15:2-4; Psalm 73:27; Jeremiah 17:13; Ezekiel 18:24-26; Hebrews 10:26-29,38,39; 2 Peter 2:20,21; Revelation 21:8)

“Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted” (verse 6). The apostle, having recited their privileges,

proceeded to the account of their faults and punishments which should serve as warning to believing youths. We must not do as they did lest we suffer like them.

Question 3: (a) What kind of sins was committed by the Israelites in our text? (b) What lesson can we learn from these as Christian youths?

“Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, nor were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer” (verses 7-10). The sins committed by the Israelites include lust, idol worship, fornication and murmuring. As Christian youths, we are not to live in sin of any kind. Therefore, we must avoid sin as poison, if we must escape the judgment of God. **“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”** (Hebrews 10:31).

Question 4: What was God’s punishment on the children of Israel for their backsliding?

From our text, twenty-three thousand people died in one day as a result of their evil (verse 8).

PASSIONATE ADMONITION TO BELIEVERS (1 Corinthians 10:12-15; 1 Timothy 1:19; Hebrews 3:12, 13; 1 Peter 5:8, 9; 2 John 9)

“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (verse 12). Though God has promised to keep us, we have our own part to play as Christian youths. We are to be on our guard, be conscious of who we are, where we are and where we are going – heaven. Every Christian youth must be conscious of eternity and the presence of Christ.

In addition, Apostle Paul gave the word of comfort to every Christian youth: **“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way**

to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (verse 13). Though we must take heed lest we fall, we should not be terrified. Our strength will be renewed in proportion to the temptations we face. We live indeed in a tempting world and are compassed about with snares. God is faithful to renew our strength to overcome temptations. He keeps His covenant and will never disappoint His children. He will not suffer us to be tempted above what we can bare. He will take care that we are not overcome, if we rely on Him and resolve to be faithful to Him. He will make a way for us to escape.

"Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry" (verse 14). Out of tender affection to the people of God he presses this advice upon them, **"flee from idolatry"**. Idolatry is evil and oppose to the true God. Therefore be not guilty of any idolatrous compliance. Do not let anything compete with the love and service of God in your life. Your watchword should be 'Others May, I cannot'. Remember the Lord is coming soon and will surely reward those who continue with Him to the end. **"Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name"** (Revelation 3:11, 12).

LESSON 631

CAUTION AGAINST COMPROMISE

Memory Verse: “*Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s Table, and of the table of devils*” (1Corinthians 10:21).

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 10:16-33

Apostle Paul recalled to the Corinthian church that they were saved just like the children of Israel were. He had shown them that the children Israel were delivered from Egyptian bondage; yet, many of them were overthrown in the wilderness for lusting after evil things. He cautioned them of the danger of being lost and rejected by God even after great spiritual experiences. He warned the church not to follow the part of idolatry, fornication, murmuring and lust like the Israelites, so that history would not repeat itself. Besides, he told them to stand firm in the hour of temptation and not to yield as God would make a way for them to overcome it.

However, he became more specific about their life in relation to their immediate society. History tells us that Corinth was one of the most populous and wealthy cities of Greece; but its riches produced pride, flamboyancy, effeminacy, and all the vices generally associated with wealth and fame. Lasciviousness, particularly, was tolerated there through the worship of Venus, and the notorious prostitution of numerous attendants devoted to her. He knew the multiplication of feasting, sacrifices and celebration that had bedeviled the city. Some of these were idolatrous though may not appear so. Hence, he saw the need to warn the church so that they would not compromise, become careless and be lured into idolatry.

CAUTION AGAINST IDOLATRY (1Corinthians 10:16-22; 8:1-6; Exodus 20:3-5; Deuteronomy 13:1-10; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:5,6; Revelation 21:8; 22:15)

The apostle cautioned the Corinthian church to flee from idolatry. He admonished them not to have anything to do

with idolatry. In doing so, he used our communion with the Lord during the Lord's Supper to buttress his point. **"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"** (Verse 16). Believers know fully well that eating of that bread and drinking the fruit of the vine is beyond mere feasting but a communion and fellowship with the Lord. Partaking of it shows we are united with the body of Christ. He also used the example of the Israelites which ate of the sacrifices made at the altars as having been identified with those altars. **"Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?"** (Verse 18).

Question 1: *Of what significance is our eating at the Lord's Table?*

In essence, he meant that anytime a believer eats of anything that has been sacrificed to idol, he has already come into a communion and fellowship with demon or the devil which that idol represents. He explains further that idols are not to be reckoned with. People who make sacrifices to idols are actually sacrificing to the devil. **"What say I then? That the idol is anything, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is anything? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils"** (verses 19, 20). Eating of such food becomes dangerous because it is not just the idols now but evil spirits involved. He forbade believers from eating anything that is served in celebration of any idol. It is not because the idol will hurt you, but that eating it brings you into fellowship with the evil spirit that idol represents.

Question 2: *Why must Christian youths avoid participating and eating at idolatrous ceremonies?*

Apostle Paul points it out clearly that **"Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's Table, and of the table of devils"** (verse 21). As Christians, we should be wise in the way we attend celebrations and feasts. Anyone that has any association with occultism should be avoided. Otherwise,

we would be incurring the wrath of God upon ourselves. **“Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?”** (Verse 22). God has never been favorably disposed to idolatry. He would never share His glory with anyone. Idolaters will have their part in the lake of fire. **“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death”** (Revelation 21:8).

CONDUCT OF THE PURIFIED AMIDST THE IDOLATROUS: (1Corinthians 10:23, 25-28; 8:4-6; Romans 14:14; 1Timothy 4:1-5; Titus 1:15)

“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not” (verse 23). When Paul said **“all things are lawful for me”**, we should understand that he was talking in a particular context. He had earlier said in verse 15, **“I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say”**. So the people he was talking to knew that he did not mean that he had the liberty to do anything whatsoever. He was actually referring to his freedom to choose to or not to eat things sacrificed unto idol. Since he reckoned that idols are nothing and all that are called gods, as many as they may be are not recognized except our God. So, whatever sacrifice offered to them was offered to nothing.

Thus, he admonished the believers, **“Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake”** (verse 25). We should not be unnecessarily curious about the source of the food we buy in the market. The seller may not be a believer but we cannot begin to ask if he had made a sacrifice of what we are buying from him/her to an idol. **“For the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof”** (verse 26). God owns everything on earth and He has sanctified all foods for us. This, however, does not cancel the need to check up how hygienic the source of what we are buying is. If you are not sure of how hygienic and clean any food or drink might be, avoid them.

Question 3: *With what attitude should a believer buy and/or eat things from the market?*

“If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. But if any man say unto you, this is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof” (verses 27, 28). If it so happens that we are invited to **“a feast”**, if we are disposed to it, the apostle says **“go”**. When you are served with food, eat it. But if in the process someone says the feast was all about an idol, we cannot eat such food.

CONSIDERATE CONDUCT OF THE BELIEVER:
(1Corinthians 10:24, 29-33; 8:7-13; Romans 14:15-23)

“Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s wealth” (Verse 24). Paul considered that even if he had the freedom to eat anything, they did not make him look more spiritual before God and neither could they make the weaker believers more edified. Hence, admonished that we should be more thoughtful of others. If what we eat does not add any spiritual value to us yet destroys the faith of others, we should forgo it in consideration of the faith of others. He wants us to focus more on what would make the faith of others to become better.

If our claim and attitude of liberty of the Spirit or grace brings confusion to another child of God or has the potential to create doubt in another believer, God wants us to forgo it. **“Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man’s conscience? For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?”** (Verse 29, 30).

Question 4: *What should we consider as we exercise our liberty?*

Paul the apostle became more specific, **“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God”** (verse 31). Whatsoever liberty we may seem to have, it must be used to the glory of God. This is not even limited to eating things sacrificed to idols. We

should be careful that we do not make others, regardless of whether they are saints or sinners, to stumble in what we do. **“Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved”** (verses 32, 33). He was not selfish but committed himself to doing things that would enhance the salvation of others. Pleasing all men in all things does not connote compromise but resignation from all personal interests that could jeopardize the spiritual developments of others (1Corinthians 9:19-22).

LESSON 632

BELIEVERS' COMPORIMENT IN GOD'S HOUSE

Memory Verse: "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40).

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 11:1-19

The Scripture, as a guide, sets in order the ways believers in Christ should conduct themselves in all things. This covers the areas of adornment, conversation, interaction and relationship in the church and the society. Our submission to God and man is also spelt out in the word of God. Unfortunately, there is misunderstanding, confusion, perversion and deviation from biblical patterns in these areas. This emanated from the drift of man from the right path at the Garden of Eden. Man's heart, being polluted, is filled with all unrighteousness (Romans 1:29).

Question 1: *What are some of the biblical admonitions on Christian conducts in the house of God?*

Our text outlines some of the ways Christians should conduct themselves in the house of God. They are: (1) believers should endeavor to follow divine ordinances put in place in the house of God; (2) Christ is the head of the church and all should submit to His commands; (3) man is the head of the woman, therefore she should submit to him; (4) the conduct of the man and woman in the church should be in accordance with godly principles; and (5) there should not be disorderliness in the house of God. All these formed the basis of our discussion in this study.

COUNSEL AND COMMENDATION FOR THE CHURCH: (Corinthians 11:1, 2; 4:16, 17; Ephesians 5:1; Philippians 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; 2 Thessalonians 3:9; 2:15; Judges 7:17, 18)

"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you" (1 Corinthians 11:1, 2). In every generation, there

are always individuals who are set to do the will of God in all things. Paul the apostle, admonishing the church on Christian conducts in the house of God said, “**Be ye followers of me**”. His manner of life is to follow Christ in all things. He has given ordinances which he received from God to the church. He was a minister who practiced what he preached. He made it known in 1 Corinthians 9:26, 27 that he was subject to the laws of Christ: “**But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway**” (1 Corinthians 9:27).

Question 2: *What are some of the specific areas in which Paul followed Christ's example?*

From the time of his conversion, he followed Christ wholeheartedly in every area. He obeyed Him in service in spite of strict oppositions. He followed Christ's example of laying down His life for humanity according to His Father's will. He also followed Christ's example in holy living. He was sanctified through faith in Christ Jesus and kept himself pure and perfect. Another area is the commitment of Paul to the salvation of sinners. Jesus was committed to the salvation of sinners and eventually died for that purpose. Paul also faced life-threatening persecutions but did not give up even to the point of death. Later, he told Timothy that his time was up and ready to be offered. “**For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand**” (2 Timothy 4:6). He was one of the Martyrs of the Lord Jesus Christ. Like Paul the apostle, Christian youth should endeavor to follow Christ wholeheartedly and be committed to God's service.

Paul was a minister who preached with the demonstration of the power of God. Christ's ministry was full of the demonstration of the power of God. Miracles, signs and wonders accompanied the ministration of Christ. Closely looking at Paul's ministry, all these were the seal of his apostleship. Ministering with power comes as a result of personal consecration and prayer which was not lacking in his ministry. Paul sought to know Christ more intimately as seen in this scripture: “**That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his**

sufferings, being made conformable unto his death” (Philippians 3:10). Any youth who wants to be an instrument of God like Paul, as a follower of Jesus Christ, must be born again, consecrated, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. God is searching for youths like Paul.

“Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you” (verse 2). It is gladdening to know at this time that the church in Corinth has improved. Paul was impressed with this positive attitude to the word of God by the Corinthians. They were praised by him. In the same way, whenever believing youths practice and live by the word of God, it gladdens the heart of their leaders and pastors. God is also impressed whenever youths obey His commands. While Paul praised them for doing well, God brings His unlimited blessings on them. Therefore, Christian youths should make effort to obey the word and ordinances of God in every area of their lives.

CHRISTIAN CONDUCT IN THE CHURCH (1 Corinthians 11:3-15; Ephesians 5:23, 26; Philippians 2:7-9; 1 Peter 3:1-5; Titus 2:11, 12)

The Corinthian Church whom Paul said was rich in spiritual things seems to lack complete knowledge and right application of the Bible. There are some sensitive issues which, if not properly handled could bring pollution into the church. This they seemed not to know. Even today, some believers still think that God is not careful about these foundational issues concerning our conducts. They have forgotten that the Bible enjoins us to **“Remove not the old landmark...”** (Proverbs 23:10).

“But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman *is* the man; and the head of Christ *is* God” (verse 3). Christ is the head of the Church and all must submit to Him in all things. His verdict in all areas of life as stated in the Bible is mandatory. His will must be done by all. The man is the head of the woman. This is so because the man was created first and he is the image of God. The woman was made from man and she is the glory of the man. This must not be misunderstood and misapplied by the man. There

are other commands by the Lord that guide on how a man should relate with his wife (Ephesians 5:25). A man should love his wife as Christ loves the Church and gave Himself for it. On the other hand, the woman should submit to her husband as to the Lord. God is the head of Christ.

Question 3: *How should a man and a woman conduct themselves while praying?*

“Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven” (verses 4, 5). From these two verses, when a man is praying, his head should not be covered. But for the woman, she must cover her head. This command is only limited to the time of prayer or while he or she is preaching. A man can cover his head whenever he is not praying or preaching if he chooses. The woman may also uncover her head whenever she is not praying or preaching.

Question 4: *Is there perversion to this command in the church today?*

Some women pray without covering their heads. They argue that, since women have long hairs, they have no need of covering their head. Their confusion is a result of their errors and polluted minds. The word of God says, **“Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?”** (Verse 13, 14). This is the standard of God and must strictly be adhered to. Christian youth should follow the scripture and not the multitude. **“Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment”** (Exodus 23:2).

CONTENTION IN THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH (1 Corinthians 11:16-19; Numbers 12:1,2; 16:1-3; 1 Corinthians 7:17; 14:33; Psalm 68:6; Matthew 12:25)

In spite of some positive changes in the Corinthian church, the issue of contention and division still existed. **“For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe**

it” (verse 18). It is unfortunate that, despite the fact that the Spirit of God was speaking in the church through His servant, there were few ones who were not willing to change, being self-willed. There are youths in the church today who are not ready to mend their ways on important issues like Christian dressing, comportment in the church, home and school. They still argue that Christian comportment is irrelevant as God only looks into the heart. It does not matter whatever they do outwardly, they say. They assume that they can put on anything, go anywhere, and relate with anyone. This ought not to be so. The Bible commands that, **“Let all things be done decently and in order”** (1 Corinthians 14:40). **“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death”** (Proverbs 16:25).

Question 5: *What were the areas of contention in the Corinthian church?*

Initially, the pronounced area of contention in the Corinthian church was preference for particular leaders. **“For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?”** (1 Corinthians 3:4). This emanated from their carnality. This time, their contentions were on Christian comportment in the church. They have moved from just mere preference for particular leaders to heresy.

Question 7: *What is heresy?*

“For there must be also heresies among you that they which are approved may be made manifest among you” (verse 19). Heresy is an act in which someone contradicts established biblical teachings. Whenever a youth is always contentious and self-willed, he must be reprovved. But, if he hardens his heart, he will soon go into heresy. He will begin to justify his action and manner of life. He will be making secret converts to himself. Christian youths who are heaven-conscious are warned not to keep company with anyone who comes with contrary doctrines. Such youths should maintain scriptural comportment in the church and influence others to do so. **“If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed”** (2 John 1:10).

LESSON 633

PREPARATION FOR THE LORD'S SUPPER

Memory Verse: *“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come”* (1 Corinthians 11:26).

Text: 1 Corinthians 11:20-34

The Lord's Supper is one of the ordinances instituted by our Lord Himself during the course of the last Passover with the disciples. It is to be a perpetual observance by the church of Christ. In this text, the apostle sharply rebukes the Corinthian church for disorders associated with partaking of the Lord's Supper and reiterated the danger of taking it unworthily by any member of the Church. He did not want the ordinance which was intended to make them better and promote their spiritual growth to be misapplied. The danger of doing so is condemnation from the Lord (verse 29). Paul asserted that it is better for those who were hungry to eat at home than taking the Lord's Supper unworthily. God does not expect us to **“drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's Table and of the table of devils”** (1 Corinthians 10:21).

Apostle Paul was very vigilant to observe the negative practice by some Corinthian believers who ate the Lord's Supper unqualified. He concluded that such did not discern the body of Christ. We observed from this that Paul was not only a leader over this Church but also a shepherd with keen interest in their spiritual well-being

Question 1: *What is the duty of a youth leader over the flock in the house of God?*

“Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds” (Proverbs 27:23). Like the apostle, it is the duty of every leader to be vigilant and watch over the flock under them, and also to encourage and correct them when necessary. This becomes necessary in order

not to accommodate false worship or doctrine in the church of the living God.

IMPROPER ATTITUDE DURING THE LORD'S SUPPER:
(1 Corinthians 11:20-22; Matthew 26:26-29)

“For in eating every one taketh before *other* his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? Or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise *you* not” (verse 21, 22). Apostle Paul also received information on the way the Lord's Supper was conducted in the Corinthian Church. He discovered that they have deviated from the standard he received from the Lord. Whenever they observed this ordinance, they allowed worldly displays and division in the place of true worship. Many of the wealthy Corinthians seem to have liberty at the Lord's Table. They would not wait for one another; the rich despised the poor, and ate and drank up the provisions they themselves brought before the poor were allowed to partake. This was profaning a sacred institution and corrupting a divine ordinance. What God appointed to be observed for the benefit of their souls was employed to feed their lusts and passions. What should have been a bond of unity and love was made an instrument of discord.

Question 2: What should be the attitude of Christian youths during the Lord's Supper service?

The time of taking the Lord's Supper should be for sober reflection of the merciful act of Christ towards mankind. It should be a time for us to examine our spiritual standing in Christ. It should also be a time to assess our readiness for the rapture of the saints. Christian youths are expected to behave themselves orderly and have respect for one another during the Lord's Supper service. **“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another”** (Romans 12:10). The conduct of the Corinthian worshippers was contempt of God's house. Apostle Paul made it clear to them that if they had a mind to feast, they might do it at home and not to come to the Lord's Table to quarrel and keep the poor from their share of the provision. Such a shameful behavior brings

discouragement to the poor, whose souls were as dear to Christ, and cost him as much, as those of the rich. It is sinful for Christians to treat their fellow Christians with disrespect. We should be careful that our behavior at the Lord's Table should have no appearance of dishonor for Christ.

INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING THE LORD'S SUPPER:

(1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Exodus 12:13, 14, 26, 27; Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:13-20; Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 10:15-17)

“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the *same* night in which he was betrayed took bread” (verse 23). To rectify their irregularities, Apostle Paul gave a review of the Lord's Supper as he received it from the Lord. He analyzed to them how he came by the knowledge of it. He was not among the apostles at the first institution; but he had received from the Lord what he delivered to them. He had the knowledge of this matter by revelation from Christ: and what he had received he communicated, without adding or diminishing. A Christian leader must learn to receive from Christ and deliver without alteration.

“And when he had given thanks, he brake *it*, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also *he* took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me” (verses 24, 25).

Question 3: *What are the materials for the Lord's Supper and their significance?*

The materials for the Lord's Supper are unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine. These represent Christ's body and blood.

Question 4: *What are the benefits of partaking of the Lord's Supper?*

“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come” (verse 26). As Christian youths participate in the Lord's Supper, it will bring the fullness of life and grace as true Disciples

of Christ. It also brings healing and strength. It is to be celebrated till the Lord comes in His own glory with His holy angels.

IMPLICATION OF PARTICIPATING UNWORTHILY IN THE LORD'S SUPPER: (1Corinthians 11:27-34; 5:7, 8; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Revelation 19:7-9)

“Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord” (verse 27).

Question 5: *What are the consequences of taking the Lord's Supper unworthily?*

The consequence of partaking at His table “unworthily” is disastrous, both on the individual youth and entire the church. **“Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep”** (1 Corinthians 11.27-30). First, the irreverent partaker is guilty of despising the sacredness of the institution of the Lord's Supper. He is guilty of despising the body and blood of Christ. He profanes the ordinance and dishonors the Savior once again. Instead of being cleansed and healed by His blood, he is guilty of His blood. This leads to destruction and doom (verse 29). The punishment could take the form of sickness, infirmity or death, **“For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep”** (1 Corinthians 11:30).

Question 6: *Should this divine wrath against the irreverent prevent believing youths from participating in the Lord's Supper?*

Certainly not. Watchful, waiting and holy Christian youths are to be encouraged to partake at the Lord's Table and enjoy the blessings thereby; but not without examining themselves. **“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup”** (verse 28).

Self-examination includes trying and approving oneself in the mirror of the word of God. While doing this, the communicant should consider the sacredness of this holy ordinance and examine his own thought, conscience, motive and general life style. Such self-examination is both necessary and helpful when the Christian youth is contemplating on taking the Lord's Supper. Obedience to it will bring healing, health and spiritual vitality.

“For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world” (verses 31, 32). Christian youths should thoroughly search themselves before partaking in the Lord's Supper. If they discover that something is wrong in their spiritual life, they should make correction, after which they can partake in the Lord's Supper. This will also enable them to avert divine judgments. **“Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come”** (verses 33, 34). Apostle Paul closes with a caution against the irregularities in the Corinthian church, charging them to avoid all indecency at the Lord's Table. They were to eat for hunger and pleasure at home, and not to change the holy supper to a common feast, otherwise, they would come together for condemnation. Other things he found wrong with them would be rectified when he comes to them. Leaders should follow Paul's example of how to correct ills in Christ's Church.

LESSON 634

DIVERSITY OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Memory Verse: *“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal”* (1 Corinthians 12:7).

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 12:1-31

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a definite Christian experience subsequent to sanctification experience. With the infilling of the Holy Spirit, the believer is anointed with the power of God and energized for service. This experience is the beginning of the manifestation of spiritual gifts in the life and ministry of a Christian youth. Therefore, the subject of spiritual gifts is of paramount importance to all Christian youths today. We need to be thoroughly enlightened in the things which are freely given to us by God. **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ”** (Ephesians 1:3).

Question 1: *What are spiritual gifts and why do we need to study them?*

Spiritual gifts are supernatural manifestations of the power of God with diverse operations through a Spirit-filled believer for the benefits of the Church. We study these gifts for a number of reasons. One, it helps to stir up the gifts of God in a Christian youth (2 Timothy 1:6). Two, it is to avoid ignorance in spiritual matters. God does not want any of His children to be ignorant (1 Corinthians 12:1). Three, it encourages Christian youths to plunge into the gifts of the Spirit and receive them. Four, it guides us against erroneous teachings and unscriptural experiences. This will help us to be able to differentiate between genuine and counterfeit gifts. Five, there will be great results and impact in the preaching of the gospel when believers receive the gifts of the Spirit (Romans 1:11, 12).

Furthermore, spiritual gifts are different from natural talents and the fruit of the Spirit. The natural gifts are gifts we are born with or acquired through learning while spiritual gifts are supernatural gifts received by believers after the

baptism in the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, the fruit of the Spirit is imparted in us after the salvation experience. It is the evidence of being saved from sins. Through the gifts of the Spirit, believers demonstrate the multifaceted nature of the power of God. However, there are some misconceptions concerning these gifts today in the Church.

Question 2: What are the misconceptions on the subject of the gifts of the Spirit?

There are several misconceptions on the subject of the gifts of the Spirit. These misconceptions have given rise to a number of experiences ranging from the extreme of hypocrisy to another extreme of fanaticism. It is said that in some churches and Christian assemblies the operation of the gifts of the Spirit is limited to the apostolic age. Hence, it is not for this age or unnecessary for us to study them today. Also, in some other churches, the manifestation of spiritual gifts goes on in such an unedifying and unscriptural manner that calls for caution. Neither of these extremes is correct. The one that gives no place for the gifts of the Spirit quenches the Spirit while the other that abuses the gifts of the Spirit grieves the Spirit. The Bible says: **“Quench not the Spirit”** and it also says **“And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God...”** (1 Thessalonians 5:19; Ephesians 4:30). Therefore, as a Bible-believing Church, we accept the teaching and operations of the gifts of the Spirit. In the words of a Bible writer, it *“is one in which the gifts of the Spirit is powerfully manifest in a harmonious purpose, in loving co-operation, in a common aim, and in a common loyalty to Christ. All gifts work in harmony: all ministries supplement one another: and all operations work towards the same objective. Any other condition is contrary to the program of the Holy Spirit”*.

THE CLASSIFICATION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS (1 Corinthians 12:1-10; Ephesians 4:11, 12)

“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all” (verses 4-6). In seeking to give a clear presentation on the subject of spiritual gifts, Apostle Paul stated that, there are

diversities of gifts, that is, the diversities of administrations or ministrations and operations by the same Spirit of God. From our text, there are nine spiritual gifts. These gifts can be classified into three groups based on their similarities and functional relationships.

Question 3: *Mention the nine gifts of the Spirit and classify them.*

The nine gifts of the Spirit are: the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, the discerning of Spirits, the gift of faith, the gift of healing, the working of miracles, the gift of prophecy, the divers kinds of tongues and interpretation of tongues. These gifts can be grouped into three. The first group is the GIFTS OF REVELATION. The spiritual gifts that can be classified under this group are the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge and the discerning of Spirit. The gifts of the word of wisdom and word of knowledge are similar with a slight difference. The word of knowledge relates to raw facts on a matter while the word of wisdom relates to the analysis of the facts and the actions taken based on it. Hence, the word of wisdom has to do with the application of knowledge. These gifts are needed in the administration of the Church. There are many occasions which arise in the Church or dealing with new problems, when special revelations of wisdom and knowledge are needed. Therefore, these gifts are needed to guide decisions in church matters.

An example of the need of these gifts to meet occasions that arise in the church was seen in the selection of Stephen and other deacons who were full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom. Another example was Solomon's judgement. There was no human witness to guide him. Also, there was no blood test, and no institution that would have taught him the procedures of dispensing justice in that situation. He depended on the wisdom of God and judged the matter rightly. The response of the children of Israel to Solomon's judgement shows the source of the wisdom.

“And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king: for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him, to do judgment” (1 Kings 3:28).

The second group is the GIFTS OF POWER. The gifts under this group are the gift of faith, the gift of healing and the working of miracles. The gift of faith is the extraordinary faith to do exploit for the benefits of the Church. Moses exercised this kind of faith when he led the children of Israel across the Red Sea in the face of seemingly insurmountable difficulties. David also exercised this kind of faith when he faced Goliath. Paul the apostle demonstrated this gift of faith when he said: **“Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me”** (Acts 27:25). The gifts of healing and working of miracles work together. The third group is the GIFTS OF INSPIRATION. This consists of the gift of prophecy, diverse kinds of tongues and interpretation of tongues. These gifts can also be called Vocal gifts. It is important to note that it is the Holy Spirit inside the believer that inspires him to speak.

THE CLARIFICATION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS (1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 11, 18; Colossians 1:28; 2 Kings 6:8-23; Luke 13:11-17; Acts 16:16-18; 21:8-11)

Scriptural examples of the operations of the gifts of the Spirit abound and these help in clarifying them. **“But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will”** (verse 11).

Question 4: Explain briefly the gifts of the Spirit mentioned in our text.

One, the word of wisdom is a supernatural manifestation of God’s wisdom at the time it is needed. Two, the word of knowledge is the supernatural revelation of divine knowledge. Knowledge is the raw facts while wisdom is the right use of the knowledge for the benefits of the church. God gives these gifts to profit and to comfort the whole body of Christ. The gifts of wisdom and the word of knowledge are needed in preaching and teaching the word of God (Colossians 1:28). The minister who deeply feels the responsibility of leading his sheep to heaven needs to seek for wisdom from God that goes beyond his natural ability. The gift of wisdom is different from the natural endowment of wisdom. The gift of the word of knowledge operates by the impartation of God’s exclusive knowledge to a believer

who in turn uses it for the benefits of the church. It is not the knowledge we acquire through learning but a divine one. It is important to note that the operation of the gift of knowledge without the word of wisdom destroys the church. When God gives you a word of knowledge, you need the gift of the word of wisdom to apply the knowledge to the profit, comfort and edification of the whole church. Three, the gift of discernment is a supernatural insight into the realm of the spirits to detect and identify them. This is neither suspicion nor imagination. For instance, Elisha saw the chariots of fire because he could discern spirits. Also, Paul saw the spirit of divination in the damsel who followed them by the spirit of discernment. Note that the discerning of spirits goes along with casting out of devils.

Furthermore, the fourth gift which is the gift of faith is the supernatural manifestation of the assurance of answer to prayer in unusual situations. This is a special manifestation of faith. This gift enables the believer to stand upon the word of God, speak in the name of the Lord and assure others of the fulfillment of the promises (Acts 27:21-25, 44). This is a mountain-moving faith that works supernaturally. Five, the gift of healing is the supernatural manifestation of the power of God to heal the sick. For instance, Peter demonstrated this gift when he healed Aeneas. **“And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately”** (Acts 9:34). Six, the working of miracles is a supernatural manifestation of powerful works. The powerful works wrought through this gift include raising the dead and miraculous alteration of circumstances. An example was the crossing of the Red sea. Moreover, the seventh is the gift of prophecy. It is a supernatural utterance in one’s own language. The working of the gift of prophecy is devoid of the ecstasy and ravishment witnessed in “prayer houses”. This gift is for the profit of the whole church. **“But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church”** (1Corinthians 14:3, 4). Here, we see the exact nature of prophecy. It is an inspired, anointed utterance in the assembly that edifies,

comforts and exhorts the brethren. Prophecy should not come through fleshly excitement. Eight, the gift of diverse kinds of tongues is the supernatural manifestation by way of utterances in different languages unknown to the one speaking. The early church spoke or prayed in diverse kinds of tongues on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4). Paul the apostle said: **“I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all”** (1 Corinthians 14:18). He who speaks in diverse kinds of tongues utters the deep things of the Spirit. **“For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries”** (1 Corinthians 14:2). As a Bible-believing church, it is unruly to rise up to speak in diverse tongues during the preaching of the word of God. It is not a mark of spirituality. Therefore, orderliness and decency are required in the house of God. Nine, the gift of interpretation of tongues is a supernatural utterance of interpretation of unknown languages to the one speaking. **“He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying”** (1 Corinthians 14:4).

THE CONDITIONS FOR RECEIVING SPIRITUAL GIFTS: (1Corinthians 12:7, 11; 14:1)

Many believers desire spiritual gifts as children desire toys to play with. They do not have any inner deep-seated genuine motive for desiring them. Also, some others feel that **“the gift of God may be purchased with money”** and used for selfish purpose (Acts 8:14-25).

Question 5: *What does it take to receive spiritual gifts from God?*

Spiritual gifts are not sought in vacuum. You must be saved, separated, sanctified, and Spirit-filled and consecrated to the Lord. You must have earnestly used what you already have (Romans 12:6-8). He would not give you too much at a time. What you do with the gifts you presently possess determines whether He will give you more. Those who bury

their gift(s) will pray in vain for more. Consecration does not mean only promising future obedience but it includes complete yieldedness to God's revealed will today. God's challenge to all Christian youths is: "**desire spiritual gifts**".

THE CALL TO SERVE THE CHURCH OF GOD (1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Romans 12:3-5; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Ephesians 4:3-6)

From our text, we discover the scriptural explanation of the relationship of the members of the body of Christ. The text also emphasized the possibility, necessity and responsibility of serving the body of Christ by all members.

Question 6: *What did Apostle Paul use the different parts of the human body to illustrate in our text?*

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ" (verse 12). Here, the Scripture speaks on the unity of the church. The Scripture compares the Church to the human body. The human body has several parts – head, eyes, noses, mouth, legs, hands, etc. Though the parts of the body are many, they all work together in unity. In the same vain, the Church ought to be one although the members are many. All the members of the Church should know that Christ placed them in the body for a purpose. At salvation, the Holy Spirit baptizes the new believer into the body of Christ. **"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit"** (verse 13). Therefore, as soon as we get saved, all tribal, natural, social, professional or academic discriminations are removed. It is a sin against God when brethren in the Youth Home Success Fellowship or the School Fellowship divide along tribal lines. It is a sin to discriminate against a member of the fellowship because of his/her gender. The purpose of Christ's prayer is that all who are saved may be one in Him. It takes humility to keep the unity of the brethren in the Church. Hence, the cooperation of all the members of the church is required for unity to be achieved.

Question 7: *What is the mark of unity among believers?*

The mark of unity is love flowing from our hearts to one another like liquid gold (John 13:43). It is God's command to love. It is the duty and great service we owe one another. We should love under all circumstances. We should love one another as Christ has loved us. Our love must be sacrificial, selfless and sincere.

We have different members of the body carrying out diverse functions. Every member has a function to perform; otherwise, if the duty is not addressed, the body will cripple. We as members of the body of Christ should seek how best to serve the body of Christ. The areas of services range from the high profile to the daily regular duty of caring, giving and showing mercy. We can serve the brethren by helping them in their academic work, comforting the distressed and bereaved, cleaning the fellowship location, visiting the sick, weak and lonely. Do something to reduce the burden of others. A song writer says: "Somebody needs your love".

"Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?" (Verses 29, 30). The point here is that we should not compete with one another. We should do whatever the Lord has for us with all our might. For example, Philip in the early church accepted what he was given to do and did it cheerfully and successfully. He was later called to be an evangelist; and through him, Samaria received the gospel. We should be like Philip and leave the future to God.

In summary, we are called to a higher experience in the Lord and service through the gifts of the Spirit. These will enable us to serve and care for the body of Christ. Therefore, **"covet earnestly the best gifts"** (verse 31).

LESSON 635

MODERATION AND CHRISTIAN DRESSING

Memory Verse: “Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand” (Philippians 4:5).

TEXT: Philippians 4:5-13; 1 Peter 3:1-6; 1 Timothy 2:9, 10

Moderation refers to an attitude of life that is not excessive. It is doing what is considered acceptable, proper, appropriate or normal. In life, we relate with people and they watch our actions and reactions, even if those actions do not directly concern them. The Scripture says, “**Let not then your good be evil spoken of ... Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded**” (Romans 14:16; Titus 2:6). Our conduct during wedding/funeral ceremonies, standard of living as shown by the use of technology such as handset, and our dressing should be moderate.

It is our attitude of patience in life that will establish our souls (Luke 21:19). The impatient, agitated and anxious Christian is not a good example of the forbearance of Jesus Christ. “**Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh**” (James 5:8). Our lifestyles are to be examples of moderation in everything. Moderation must be reflected in a believer’s comportment, desires, ambitions, etc. In our text, Paul the apostle enjoined the Philippian church to exhibit moderation in all things. He also practiced it (Philippians 4:12).

CHRIST-LIKE MODERATION (Philippians 4:5-13; 2:5; 1 Peter 3:1-6; 1 Corinthians 6:12)

The exhortation to be moderate by Apostle Paul was given to the believers. Moderation is a spiritual virtue that should be found in any genuine child of God. “**Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand**” (Philippians 4:5). In our desire for every legitimate thing of this life, there should be moderation. This we could see in the life of Abraham who, though much older than Lot, and being the

heir of the promise of God's covenant blessings, gave Lot the freedom of first choice over the pasture for their cattle. He refused to be drawn into dispute among their herdsmen over grazing land for their cattle. He said to lot: **"Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left"** (Genesis 13:9). In separating for good, notice also that Abraham did not evict Lot by force, though it was in his power to do so. He even needed to appeal to him, saying, **"I pray thee"**. How many believers today would confidently comport themselves like Abraham? The word of God teaches godliness and contentment as being of great gain. Believers must not insist on their rights to the point of strife, as that could deny them of heaven. Therefore, moderation will prolong your life on earth.

Question 1: *Mention some areas in which Christian youths must exercise moderation.*

Christian youths are not expected by the Lord to get involved in the tendencies of pleasing men, excessive ambition, lavish graduation ceremonies, elaborate Christian engagements/marriages, naming and funeral ceremonies. These are not in agreement with the principle of moderation. Chasing after worldly fashions and hair styles to match the taste of sports, entertainments and movie stars, etc. are at variance with moderation. Such attitude shows that the individual is unconverted and he is a victim of inferiority complex. He lacks satisfaction and confidence in the God he claims to serve. Also, we must manifest moderation in our words for, **"in the, multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath"** (Proverbs 10:19; James 1:19). A life of talkativeness offends God. God commands sound, faultless speech, and moderation. **"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath"** (James 1:19).

What about moderation in the things we eat? Many people have developed bodily ailments because of lack of self-control in eating. Over-eating, otherwise called gluttony,

is sin. It is a mark of selfishness. Some unmanageable appetites arising from unwholesome eating habits have been blamed for obesity, heart diseases, hypertension and high-blood pressure. Even when invited to a feast with abundance of provisions, God's instruction is to be moderate (Proverbs 23:1-3, 6-8). Furthermore, some people engage in unduly long dry fasting for weeks, and thereby have ignorantly injured their health. **“Let your moderation be known unto all men”**. As the coming of the Lord draws nearer, believers must reflect on this important injunction and live by it.

CHRISTIAN ADORNMENT (1 Peter 3:3-5; 1 Timothy 2:9; Romans 12:16; 1 Corinthians 11:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:22)

Adornment embraces all the things we wear. Yet, the Lord is concerned also about our inner adornment, which should produce a moderating and sobering influence on our outward adornment. In I Peter 3: 4, the word of God enjoins Christian youths to adorn themselves with **“the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price”**.

In these last days, when some so-called “Christians” and “pastors” permit indecent dressing, it will take strong biblical conviction to bring about a change. Christians who take indecent and elaborate dressing as a practice are wrong. When youths who profess being Christians wear dresses that expose their back, chests, navels, armpits, or laps in the house of God, schools or on the streets, it is evident that such ungodly dressing is aimed at attracting attention to self rather than glorifying God.

Costly adornments like such as watches and straps, golden hand bands, chains, earrings and other deviations only help to inflame pride and vanity. Similarly, worldly hair styles including perms, curls, waves, weavons, etc. are clearly indicative of a depraved heart (1 Timothy 2:9 10; 1 Peter 3:3,4). There are those who mount strident opposition to moderation in dressing. They say, “my God is not poor”. And the only way to demonstrate the riches of God is by disobedience, pride and worldliness. The Christian is enjoined not to love the world for he that loves

the world the love of the Father is not in him (1 John 2:15-17). We are commanded to emphasize the adornment of the inward man rather than of the outward man (1 Peter 3:4).

Question 2: *Mention the things that make the believer's life radiant.*

“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; nor it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16). What makes believer to shine is not our dressing but our total obedience to God's word and holy living. Those who argue over what to wear are “the mixed multitude”. They desire to dress in the attire and style of the world. They might appear to have come out of the world at salvation, but the world, is still in them. The soul panting after God, reaching out for true holiness and heaven gives no attention to worldly dressing. Such an individual has yielded his body as a living sacrifice to God. (Romans 12:1). The spiritually hungry do not desire the show and style of the world. They are instead thirsty for and desirous of peculiar lifestyle that is wholly pleasing to God.

Question 3: *What kind of adornment does the Bible recommend for believers?*

The guiding principle in dressing is always in favor of neatness, simplicity and decency. The primary purpose of dressing is to cover our nakedness appropriately, modestly and moderately. A real believer must **“abstain from all appearance of evil”** (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

CAUTION AGAINST COMPROMISE (Philippians 4:5, 8, 9; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Galatians 6:7; Isaiah 3:16-23)

“Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand” (Philippians 4:5). This is an express command from God that our moderation as Christian youth should be noticeable because His coming is at hand. Jesus says **“if ye love me, keep my commandments”** (John 14:15). **“...if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples**

indeed.” Some people preach that God watches the heart only. They forget that the believer’s body is the temple of God. **“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”** (1 Corinthians 3:16).

Question 4: *What are the consequences of misusing our body?*

God will judge those who misuse their bodies; the Lord shall smite them, their beauty will be turned to ashes, their glory to shame and they shall be exposed to defeat (Isaiah 3:16-26). **“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad”** (2 Corinthians 5:10). The judgment of God shall be without partiality, it shall be according to how you have lived your life which include your dressing (Galatians 6:7).

God’s precepts on dressing are clear and unambiguous and should pose no burden to every heaven-bound pilgrim. The simple test, which our dressing and indeed our general outlook to life must pass through, is simply this: does it glorify God? If it does not, simply abandon it.

LESSON 636

SANCTIFICATION:

A DEFINITE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

Memory Verse: *“And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live”* (Deuteronomy 30:6).

TEXT: 1 Thessalonians 4:3, 4, 7, 8; 5:23, 24; 1 Peter 1:14-16

The experience of sanctification is one of the Bible doctrines. It is such an experience to be desired by all Christian youths. You cannot enjoy your walk with God until you are sanctified. Sanctification removes all the inner struggle against sin and makes us live perfectly with God and fellow men. After salvation, God expects every believer to grow spiritually. Sanctification experience is next to salvation. This experience enhances the Christian stability in the faith and without it, no one can see God. In this world where temptations abound, every born again boy and girl should strive to be sanctified to be able to withstand the pressure to sin.

Question 1: *Why are some Christian youths not sanctified in spite of the constant teaching on this subject in the church?*

It is unfortunate that some born again boys and girls do not possess this experience of sanctification. It is either that they are not converted or do not have proper understanding of it. Some Christian youths take the teaching on this subject lightly, while others think it takes years before they can experience sanctification. In God's provision, no one has to work for any spiritual experiences. They are all the gifts of God by grace through faith. Once the condition set by Him is met by Christian youth, they will definitely possess the experience.

Christ suffered for it so that you can partake in this experience (Hebrews 13:12, 13). Today, you are going to

have a clear understanding of sanctification, and you will also know the reasons you must have this experience and the condition you must meet before you can be sanctified.

CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF SANCTIFICATION (2 Chronicles 29:5,15-19; 7:16; Isaiah 43:21; Leviticus 21:1-15; 20:7,8,24-26; 1 Thessalonians 4:3,4; Romans 6:20,22).

Sanctification is a definite work of grace, subsequent to salvation. It means to be made holy. It is a state in which a born again boy or girl is cleansed inwardly from inbred sin. The inner tendency to sin called Adamic nature is removed through a divine operation. Thereby, the individual is freed completely and receive a pure heart fashioned after that of his God. As a Christian experience, it is the act of God's grace by which the affections of saved boys and girls are purified to love God perfectly above everything else.

Question 2: *In your own word, tell us what you understand by sanctification.*

It is a state in which a believer is cleansed from moral defilement, pollution and depraved passions. Sanctification is the same with circumcision of heart or purity of heart (Matthew 5:8). It is also the same with holiness. God's command is that we should be holy because He is holy (1 Peter 1:15, 16). The doctrine of sanctification is one of the areas in the Bible that many people do not understand. Different people have misinterpreted it in different ways. This is so because they do not study their Bible thoroughly and allow the Holy Spirit to give them the right meaning.

Question 3: *Mention some misconceptions that people have today about the subject of sanctification and state the proper views.*

Some common misconceptions are: one, the notion that sanctification or holiness experience is impossible to attain. This is wrong because God cannot require from us what He knows is not possible. God commanded the believers to be holy because He is holy (1 Peter 1:15, 16). For man to walk with the holy God, he must be holy. God still gives this gift and grace to everyone who desires to be Christ-like. There are examples of people in the Bible

that possessed this experience. They include saints like Enoch, Abraham, Joseph, Daniel, Job, Zechariah, Paul, etc. If God was able to grant them the grace to live a holy and morally upright lives in a corrupt world, He will also give the same to sincere youths who ask for it. Christ still demands today that we should be holy like our heavenly Father. **“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect”** (Matthew 5:48). Jesus also prayed for it on behalf of His disciples and all believers. Acting on the truth and possibility of living a sanctified life will surely bring answer to the prayers of Christ and the believer to pass (John 17:17, 19).

Two, the wrong notion of people who say that sanctification is possible but it must take place gradually. They believe that we grow into sanctification. This is not true. As salvation and baptism in the Holy Ghost are instantaneous Christian experiences, so is sanctification. We do not grow into sanctification but we grow in the experience after we are sanctified. Three, the notion which states that sanctification occurs by working to obtain it. But the truth is that we cannot work for our sanctification just as we cannot work for our salvation. Christ has already finished the work for our salvation and sanctification on the Cross at Calvary. Now, it is a gift to be received by faith by the Christian youth.

Four, the notion that we can only be sanctified after death. There are those who believe that it is only after death that one can be sanctified in purgatory. We need to know that there is no place like purgatory where people go to after death to be purged and perfected before being sent to heaven. But the Bible says, **“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment”** (Hebrews 9:27). Five, the notion that salvation is synonymous with sanctification. Some people believe that both of them take place as an individual gets born again. Though a believer is made morally clean with salvation experience, sanctification is a different work of grace, distinct and different from salvation. It is consequent upon salvation. It is an experience that can only be obtained by those who are already born again.

COGENT REASONS FOR SANCTIFICATION (Matthew 20:20-24; Jonah 3:4-10; 4:1-11; John 17:17; 1 Peter 1:14-16; Genesis 17:1; Leviticus 11:43-45; 19:2; 20:7,25,26; Deuteronomy 30:6; Hebrews 12:14).

When a youth gets born again, God does not take him to heaven immediately. He is still left in this polluted and perverted world. The tendency for him to get corrupted after a while is there without sanctification of heart. He will begin to notice some inclinations in his thought and desire toward the things of the world. He may experience coldness towards spiritual things. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life begin to overlap his pure spiritual desires. This shows the presence of the adamic nature or the inbred sin which branches were chopped off at salvation, with the root left underneath. This root of sin need to be uprooted, otherwise, the branches will sprout again. When such believers remain in salvation experience alone, the tendency of going back into bondage again is high. To avoid this, sanctification becomes necessary.

Question 4: *Why is sanctification an experience the Christian youth cannot do without?*

It is so for the following reasons: (1) God commands it (Leviticus 20:7, 24-26; 1 Peter 1:14-16), (2) God demands it (Genesis 17:1). (3) It is the nature of God (Leviticus 19:2), (4) It is difficult to maintain a consistent walk with God without it (Amos 3:3; Leviticus 11:43-45), (5) It is impossible to love God perfectly without the experience (Deuteronomy 30:6). (6) It helps us to obey God and keep His word with the right motive (Deuteronomy 10:16). (7) It makes us holy like our heavenly Father both in character and in conduct (Matthew 5:48). (8) It sets us apart as peculiar children of God. (9) It brings us into perfect bond of unity with other believers (John 17:17, 21; Jeremiah 32:39), and (10) It makes us qualified for heaven (Hebrews 12:14).

Question 5: *Mention some of the evidences of unsanctified life.*

Some of the traits exhibited by, youths who are not sanctified are: inconsistent Christian living – whenever you discover that you are not consistent in your Christian walk,

know for sure that you need circumcision of heart; display of lack of sanctification is carnality – this was seen in the life of Christ’s disciples who, though born again, still displayed selfishness, strife, high-mindedness, self-exaltation, position seeking and revengeful spirit (Matthew 20:20-24; Luke 22:24-27). The need of others did not arouse a deep concern in their hearts (Matthew 15:22, 23). They showed a critical, judgmental and disapproving spirit. They were impatient and unkind (Luke 9:51-56). Moreover, their love for Christ was limited though they professed high-sounding affection (Mark 14:46-50). When you discover any or some of these traits in your life, it simply reveals to you that you need purity of heart. Without the experience, you will see things only as they affect you and you will defend yourself at the slightest reproof. You will never accept responsibility for wrongs done by you but always blame others for your faults. You will not be happy if you are not commended on occasions when you feel you have done something well. The unsanctified always wants to be noticed. The evidence of these traits in His disciples made Christ to pray for the sanctification of believers of all ages.

CONDITIONS FOR RECEIVING SANCTIFICATION (Hebrews 13:12,13; Ezekiel 36:26; Ephesians 5:25-27; Deuteronomy 30:6; 1 Peter 1:2; Matthew 5:6; Romans 12:1; 6:19; Matthew 21:22; James 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8).

God is willing to sanctify His children. He has made provisions for our sanctification. These include: (1) the blood of Jesus; (2) The word of God (John 15:3); and (3) the Spirit of God (1 Peter 1:2).

Question 6: *What conditions must a saved youth meet before he can be sanctified?*

The following are the conditions a Christian youth must satisfy before he can be sanctified. (1) He must be sure of his salvation experience – sanctification is for believers, not sinners. A sinner must first pray for salvation and be sure of his conversion experience before thinking of sanctification. (2) He must ensure that he separates himself from the world and its practices (2 Corinthians 6:17). (3) He must set himself and all that he has apart for God. His

body, soul and spirit must be separated for the use of God. He brings all of his past, present and future - personality, possessions, wisdom, talent, intellect, money, ambition, influence, position, etc. – and willingly surrenders all to Jesus. He must be so separated that the world and self will hold no attraction to him. (4) He must hunger and thirst for sanctification experience in true humility of heart (Matthew 5:6). (5) He must pray in faith, and (6) also believe in order to receive the experience (1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24). Sanctification is a possibility and it is God's will for every believer. All those who sincerely set themselves apart to live for God and ask for the experience of sanctification with unwavering faith in God will receive. Whenever a Christian youth is sanctified, it is followed by some evidences.

Question 7: *What are the evidences of a sanctified life?*

When a saved youth is sanctified, the experience will produce changes in his life.

1. There will be the witness of the Spirit in his heart
2. There will be inner peace of God that passes all understanding
3. He will begin to do things out of pure motive (Philippians 2:13-15)
4. He will have sincere love for God (Deuteronomy 30:6). Sincere love for God after sanctification will make him to serve Him joyfully. Sanctification makes us willing and ready to do anything for God.
5. Such youth will have pure and sacrificial love for the brethren and sinners (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).
6. He will be entirely surrendered to the Lord.
7. His affections will be set on things above and not on things on the earth (Psalm 73:25; Colossians 3:1, 2).
8. He will be sensitive to the Spirit's leading.
9. He will manifest Christ-like humility (Philippians 2:5-8).
10. He will be totally united with Christ and His church (John 17:21-23).

Sanctification experience is the only foundation for true unity among believers. When it is missing in the church, all that we will see is strife, carnality and bitterness.

However, youths should take note of the fact that a possessor of this experience can lose it if he becomes careless and frivolous. The following must be observed by sanctified youths to keep the experience: (1) be vigilant and sober always, (2) avoid the company of anybody that can corrupt you, (3) study the word of God always and be filled with it, (4) maintain a regular devotional life (Joshua 1:8), (6) listen to His leading always (1 Thessalonians 5:19), and (7) maintain fellowship with people of like precious faith and renew your consecration always and (8) maintain a regular prayer life. There is the possibility of you getting sanctified now. Why not pray with all your heart for it now? The promise of God is: **“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it”** (1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24).

LESSON 637

LOVING AND SERVING THE BODY OF CHRIST

Memory Verse: “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another” (Galatians 5:13).

TEXT: Galatians 5:13-15; Romans 12:3-10

The Bible is clear on the duty of each believer in the church. It emphasizes the necessity and the responsibility of serving the body of Christ. The Church is likened to a bride, a flock that the Shepherd is watching over, a kingdom where Jesus Christ is the King and having the dominion. The Church is also called the family of God, where God is the Father. She is described as a building whose foundation is Jesus Christ. Over and above all these, the Church is referred to as the Body of Christ. As every part of the body serves the whole body, we should serve Christ, the church and the brethren.

THE UNITY OF BELIEVERS IN CHRIST (Romans 12:4, 5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14; 10:17; Galatians 3:26-29; John 17:20, 21; Ephesians 2:10-22; 4:4-6).

“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many” (1 Corinthians 12:12-14). The Word of God emphatically dwells on the unity of the Church. It says, **“The body is one”**, and this truth of oneness in the body runs through these three verses. Though there is unity in the body, there is also diversity in the function of the members. This is similar to the human body. While we speak of only one body, there are several parts of the body – head, eyes, ears, nose, mouth, hands, legs, toes, etc. Though the parts of the body are several, they are united.

Question 1: *How can one become a member of the body of Christ?*

To become a member of the body of Christ, a youth must repent of his sins and believe on the Savior. At salvation, the Holy Spirit baptizes the new believer into the body of Christ. **“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit”** (1 Corinthians 12:13). As soon as we become born again, all tribal, national, social, professional or academic discriminations are supposed to be removed by our conscious effort and prayer. **“Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all”** (Ephesians 4:3-6).

The Lord in John’s gospel prayed **“...That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me”** (John 17:20,21).

Question 2: *Mention some attitudes that can affect church unity.*

It is a sin against God when brethren in the church divide against one another. Our marriages must not be colored by tribal preferences. It is unhealthy to discriminate against a member of the church along gender lines. Competition, hatred or resentment in the church contradicts the prayer of Christ and it is a sin.

Question 3: *What does it take to keep unity in the church?*

It takes humility to keep the unity of the brethren in the church. Co-operation of all the members of the church is required for unity to be achieved. **“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have**

not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one member's one of another" (Romans 12:3-5). No member of the body of Christ should think of himself more highly than he ought to think. None should be self-conceited. We should humble ourselves before other believers and let the body be one. The key to the unity of the Church is humility.

UPHOLDING LOVE AND UNITY IN THE CHURCH (John 13:34,35; 15:9-12; Romans 12:9,10; John 17:9-11, 19-21; Galatians 5:13-15; Acts 2:44-47; 1 Corinthians 6:5-8; 12:23-26)

When there are no problems, almost all members profess love, unity and brotherhood. But when problems arise, real unity is tested. This happened in the Corinthian church that apostle Paul had to say, **"I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? No, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren"** (1 Corinthians 6:5-8). We cannot but accidentally step on one another's toes as we relate together. Our interests may clash at one time or another. Unfounded stories or rumors may be peddled round about us among the careless brethren in the local church. Such offences, when there is unity, are settled in the church by the leaders. Whatever the offence, and whoever the source, we must endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the church in the bond of peace. **"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another"** (John 13:34).

Question 4: *Mention why some brethren despise others in the church?*

Some believers despise others because they feel that other brethren are not as cultured or civil as they are. But if Christ were to look for reasons why He cannot love us, He would not need to look too far before He spots a

thousand and one faults in our lives. Christ loves us just as we are and He expects us to love the brethren in the same manner. Do not look for reasons why you should not love your brethren. Rather, search for the things in their lives that would compel you to love them.

Question 5: *Why must we love the brethren?*

God commanded us to love our brethren and that reason alone suffices us to love them. Second, the soul of our brother or sister is precious before God and we must love that which God deems precious. Third, our brethren may not be wonderfully intelligent in secular matters being limited by their level of training, but spiritually, their hearts are perfect and for that, we must love them. Fourth, a brother or sister may not be a possessor of a higher education degree, but he possesses the rich grace of the eternal God to live right and victoriously. For that, we must love him. The duty and great service we have one towards another is love.

We should love under all circumstances. Brethren may make mistakes; we should still love one another. A fellowship member may deliberately go into mischief, still love him and see how you could help to restore such. People may not grant you the recognition you expect in the church, still love them. A Christian youth may be lacking the basic things of life today, but you are to still love her. She might be mightily blessed of God with all comforts of life tomorrow. We should love one another as Christ has loved us. Our love must be sacrificial, unconditional and sincere.

“And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all” (1 Corinthians 12: 6).

We have different members of the body carrying out diverse functions. Every member of the body has a function to carry out, which if not allowed, may cripple the body. We should seek how to best serve the body of Christ. Several services are available in the church.

UNDERSTANDING AREAS OF SERVICE AND MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH (1 Corinthians 12:27-31; Romans 12:4-8; Acts 6:1-6; 8:6-8,26-40; Galatians 5:13; Acts 9:36-39)

“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness” (Romans 12:6-8).

Question 6: *Mention some ministries and areas of service available in the church.*

The areas of service in the church range from the high profile to the daily regular duty of caring, giving and showing mercy. Every Christian youth has a duty to fulfill. In the youths' fellowship, all the members cannot lead, but all can give something to comfort, assist and cheer up the needy. In the local church, all the members cannot teach, but all can show mercy one to another, bearing one another's burden. In every church, all the members can be involved in serving one another one way or the other. Such duty of serving the brethren is described as “ministry”. Some serve the body by helping in various ways such as comforting the distressed and bereaved, cleaning up the church, visiting the sick, the weak and the lonely. **“Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?”** (1 Corinthians 12: 29, 30). The point here is that we should not compete with one another. We should do whatever the Lord has for us with all our might. Philip, in the early church, accepted what he was given to do and did it cheerfully. The work looked mean, but he concentrated on it. He later became an evangelist and the city of Samaria received the gospel through his ministry. Some people can hardly appreciate or adjust to serve in the days of small beginnings. But they err. We should start like Philip and leave the future to God. If you start at a seemingly low level of ministry, the Lord can, in future, lead you into a higher position.

Some people classify some work in the church as unimportant, but they miss it. God places high premium on every ministry in the church because He sets up all the

ministries. Second, the Bible says whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might (Ecclesiastes 9:10). Giving, visitation, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and giving water to the thirsty are as rewarding as any other ministry (Matthew 25: 31-46). Will you do service for your Lord today?

YOUTHS

HOME SUCCESS



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A WORD FROM THE PASTOR

Generally in the society, youths (including students) have a feeling of not being properly catered for. In contrast to this, it is good news that the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is all-embracing, to satisfy, guide and lead, not the adults only but also the youths to “**green pastures**” and “**still waters**” that their souls may be restored and refreshed with God’s righteousness and peace.

The overall success of youths academically, socially and spiritually is one of my greatest concerns. Since the students in Secondary Schools and Post-Secondary Institutions are no more children and majority of them are not yet adults, they need special care, special handling and attention.

To attain this objective, the **Youths’ Home Success Fellowship** (YHSF) is established and separated from the adults’ House Caring Fellowship. The YHSF is a forum where success principles in all areas of a student’s life are taught practically.

This booklet you now hold contains discussion study outlines relevant to the academic, social, spiritual and psychological needs of all students, so “**that our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace**” (Psalm 144:12).

May the Lord grant you the desired success in life as you systematically study this booklet week after week. Amen.

GENERAL INFORMATION

POINTS TO NOTE WHEN LEADING A DISCUSSIONAL FELLOWSHIP GROUP

1. It is required that the leader be a born-again, prayerful and sincere Christian who loves the Bible and lives a consistent Christian life which brings glory to God.
2. The leader should pray well and study the lesson thoroughly before leading the meeting.
3. Students in attendance should be encouraged to participate in the discussion study. The leader should not say what the answer is to a question until some students have had the opportunity of expressing what they think the answer is. In summary to the contributions made, the leader will give the answer.
4. The time allocated to a fellowship meeting is one hour, thirty minutes (1hr. 30min.) and made up as follows:
 - i. Opening prayer 3 minutes
 - ii. Choruses 10 minutes
 - iii. Testimonies 10 minutes
 - iv. Praise and intercession 15 minutes
 - v. Sharing of the lessons gained from the last fellowship discussion 5 minutes
 - vi. Today's fellowship discussion and summary 30 minutes
 - vii. Prayer (based on the discussion) 5 minutes
 - viii. Follow-up schedule and visitation report 10 minutes
 - ix. Closing prayer 2 minutesTotal 1 hour 30 minutes
5. Difficult questions unanswered during the study time should be sent to:

**The Youth Pastor
Deeper Life Bible Church,
P.O. Box 2767, Fall River MA 02722
Email: ichoosetobeholy@dclm.org**

STUDY 1

INTERNET: ITS USE AND ABUSE

Memory Verse: “And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away” (1 Corinthians 7:31)

Text: Daniel 11:4; 12:4

Many people agree that the last two decades of human existence have witnessed more inventions in the area of information technology than all other years of man put together. One of the products is the international network, INTERNET for short. This describes a network of networks made up of tens of thousands of computers, computer networks and users all over the world.

In the Internet, we have audio, video, pictures, pages and databases of organizations, providing several millions of information pages. The internet affords one an opportunity to read research materials, get information on every aspect of human endeavor, check JAMB results and engage in many other useful purposes. It is however sad that many youths misuse internet. The Lord warns that it is a dangerous thing for any youth to misuse whatever knowledge He has made available to man.

Q1. (a) What is Internet? _____

(i) _____

1 (b): Define the following terms:

(i) Database _____

(i) www _____

(ii) Web browser

(iii) E-mail _____

Some basic tools and terms exist for every internet use; databases explain a collection of information relating to a particular topic or purpose. The World Wide Web (www) is an information big store hoisted on computers linked to the

internet. They consist of websites, which in themselves are made up of web pages or computer documents formatted so that web browsers can display information graphically.

The electronic mail (email) is a software application used on networks for sending messages from one person to another using computer network. In most cases, e-mail systems have an address while messages are sent to mail boxes.

Q2. (a) Give four uses of the internet

(i) _____ (ii) _____

(iii) _____ (iv) _____

(b) Mention some abuses of the internet by youths today

(i) _____ (ii) _____

(iii) _____ (iv) _____

The internet can be used to buy and sell all range of items. Many good books like the complete Bible and commentary can be read on line. Till date, the www is the cheapest means of communication for sending mails, digital pictures and telephone calls. It is rather disheartening that many youths today prefer to abuse this asset. They use the opportunity to become addicted to browsing thereby neglect their studies. Some access dubious websites and engage in advance fee fraud (419), watching of pornographic pictures, writing immoral letters and reading of information that will not glorify God.

Q3. From the following scriptures, what is God's expectation from a youth as regards exposure to the internet?

(i) I Corinthians 7:31 _____

(ii) Deuteronomy 29:29 _____

(iii) Acts 2:40 _____

(iv) James 1:27b _____

Internet has come to stay. The expectation of the Holy Spirit from the saved youth remains according to the standards of the Bible. Avoid being addicted to Internet through the principle of personal discipline and prayerful living.

STUDY 2

STRIVING FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

Memory Verse: “Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm. (Daniel 6:3)

Text: Proverbs 6:6-11

Social insects (ants, wasps, bees, termites) are generally regarded as successful and this can be traced to their diligence and industry. They, therefore, present an example for youths today that hard work and maintenance of high quality in our products or service delivery will always elevate us. Since we spend half of our waking hours at work, Ecclesiastes 9:10a counsels that whatever our hand finds to do must be done with all our might.

Q1. In What specific ways can we improve the quality of our work?

(i) _____ (ii) _____

(iii) _____ (iv) _____

Excellence is not ‘a chance event’ One needs to first learn whatever vocation one is interested in very well so as to be in a position to work as an expert with minimal or no supervision. Seek more knowledge in your chosen field especially any new ideas, and apply such a knowledge wisely. Learn from past mistakes so as to minimize or out rightly eliminate returned jobs. Don’t forget to be timely in delivery while maintaining a cheerful disposition always. There is also a need for genuine interest in whatever work you are doing.

Q2. According to the following scriptures, how can we maintain excellence in the workplace?

(i) Proverbs 22:29; 12:24 _____

(ii) 2 Kings 12:15 _____

(iii) Colossians 4:5; Ephesians 5:16. _____

It takes a conscious effort for one to excel and also to continue in excellence. Diligence is an indispensable quality needed here, same as integrity. Customers and clients must see us as trustworthy and we also must avoid unnecessary waste of time in the workplace.

Q3: From the following scriptures what will be the result of:

Performing below average in the workplace?

(i) Proverbs 19:15 _____

(ii) Proverbs 24:33-34 _____

Excelling in the workplace?

(i) Proverbs 22:29 _____

(ii) Proverbs 27:18 _____

Whereas poverty, shame and hunger will follow someone whose work delivery is always below average, promotion and honor will always result from excellence. **“Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.” (Proverbs 22:29)**

Q. 4: In striving for excellence, what should be the underlying principles?

Achieving and maintaining excellence anywhere involves striving. In this, the guiding principle is in Colossians 3:17 “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”

STUDY 3

RESPECT AND REGARD FOR ELDERS

Memory verse: “Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the *LORD*” (*Leviticus 19:32*).

Text: I Peter 5:5-6

The moral condition of many youths today has degenerated beyond measure. They behave abnormally and contrary to the standard laid down in the scriptures. They are defiant and immoral. They have no manners and common courtesy. They look down on elders and have no proper regard for them. They ridicule, insult, abuse and curse them. They laugh at them, call them names, shout at them and are not ready to assist them or care for them. This is probably because some of these youths have attained high level of education or their parents have great influence in the society.

Q1. What does it entail to have respect and regards for elders?

(i) _____ (ii) _____

(iii) _____ (iv) _____

(v) _____ (vi) _____

Elders are people who are advanced in age, experience and authority hence they should be respected. To have respect and regard for our parents at home, elder brothers and sisters, older relations, teachers in the school, leaders in the church etc. means to honor them, obey them and submit to their godly guidance. It also means to polite to them and care for them. Elders should never be ridiculed or insulted, abused or cursed, called names or laughed at but should be honored.

Q.2: What are the consequences of disrespect and disregard for elders according to the following Bible references?

(i) Proverbs 30:17; 20:20 _____

(ii) I Kings 12:6-8, 13, 16 _____

(iii) Genesis 9:18, 24, 25 _____

(iv) Leviticus 24:11-16; Romans 1:29-32 _____

Punishments await any youth who demonstrates any form of disrespect and disregard toward elderly people. The punishments include walking in spiritual darkness without any direction, loss of privileges and rights, rejection and abandonment, curses, premature death and eternal death.

Q.3: How can a sinning youth escape the above punishments? _____

What salvation does in the life of a sinning youth is immeasurable. It transforms his character and conduct and makes him produce the fruits of righteousness which include obedience, humility, respect, courtesy and politeness. This removes punishments, curses and death. It is therefore imperative for a sinning youth to experience a genuine salvation.

Q.4: What are the benefits of having respect and regards for elders?

(i) _____ (ii) _____

(iii) _____ (iv) _____

(v) _____ (vi) _____

Honoring elders means honoring God and this attracts divine blessings. The blessings among others are God's acceptance, divine guidance, long life, all round success and eternal life.

STUDY 4

THE RAPTURE OF THE SAINTS

Memory verse: “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” (I Thessalonians 4:17).

Text: I Thessalonians 4:13-18; I Corinthians 15:51-52

The teaching on the rapture of the saints is to bring comfort and joy to all those who are believers in Christ Jesus. Rapture is the catching up of the saints to meet the Lord in the air. It is the event before the Great Tribulation and is one of the events of the last days. Only believers who are living an overcoming life will be raptured. Sinners and backsliders will not be raptured, **“For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie”** (Revelation 22:15). It is then important for you to consider whether or not you are prepared to meet the Lord in the air.

Q.1: What does the word “Rapture” means?

The rapture will be a marvelous experience. All believers will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and will ever remain with Him. There will be an end to all persecutions, trials, sorrow, pain and death. This is the hope of all believers. Sinners and backsliders who are still lingering in sin should take warning, repent and receive the Lord Jesus Christ. What qualifies a sinner for rapture is genuine repentance and accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. Thereafter, the saved soul should maintain a holy and consistent walk with the Lord.

Q2. From the following scriptures, what are the qualifications for the rapture?

(i) John 3:3 _____

(ii) Hebrew 12:14 _____

(iii) I John 2:6 _____

The rapture will be a time of joy for saved souls.

Q3: From the following scriptures what will hinder some youths from going in the rapture?

(i) Galatians 5:19-21 _____

(ii) Revelation 21:8 _____

(iii) Revelation 21:27 _____

(iv) Revelation 22:15 _____

Sin, in whatever form, will be a barrier to making the rapture. It is, then, important for us to count the cost of missing the rapture. A song writer says **“Have you counted the cost, if your soul should be lost, though you gained the whole world for your own”** The trumpet will sound in the twinkling of an eye, in a moment. It will be too late to repent and make restitutions. Why not prepare to meet the Lord.

STUDY 5

THE NECESSITY OF WATER BAPTISM

Memory verse: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:”
(Matthew 28:19)

Text: Matthew 3:13-17

Water Baptism is one of the cardinal doctrines of the Bible. It goes with the great commission of our Lord Jesus Christ that sinners should be reached out to. Water baptism is by immersion, that is, putting the whole body underwater.

It should be done only once not thrice and in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. The immersion signifies identification with the burial of Christ in His death and rising up in newness of life with Him at His resurrection (Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12).

Q.1: What is the proper way of carrying out Water Baptism? _____

There are youths who were baptized as infants, some were sprinkled with water, and some got baptized as unbelievers. These are all wrong ways of being baptized. They are not in line with the scriptures.

Q2: What is the qualification for water baptism? _____

When a sinner (including youths) is preached to and he genuinely repents of his sins and believes the gospel, he is qualified for water baptism. In other words, sinning youths are not qualified to be baptized (Acts 2:38).

Q3: From the following references, give examples of people in the Bible who submitted themselves to water baptism:

(i) Matthew 3:13 - 17 _____

(ii) Acts 2: 37,38,41 _____

(iii) Acts 8:36-37 _____

(iv) Acts 8:12,13 _____

(iv) Acts 10:47, 48 _____

As soon as there is an opportunity for water baptism, a saved youth should submit himself to Water Baptism as provided for in the scriptures (Romans 6:3, 4).

Q.4: Why is Water Baptism necessary for Christian youths?

(i) _____

(ii) _____

(iii) _____

(iv) _____

Water Baptism is an outward sign and testimony to the world around that a saved person has received Christ as the Lord and Savior (Acts 2:38; Titus 3:5; I Peter 3:21). It portrays the union of the believer with Christ in death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6:1-11; Colossians 2:11, 12). It also signifies an end to the old life of sin and beginning of

a new life of righteousness in Christ (Romans 16:3, 4; 7:10; 6:4-5). Every Christian youth is, therefore, enjoined to yield to this important injunction.

STUDY 6

OVERCOMING WORRY AND ANXIETY

Memory Verse: “Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (*Philippians 4:6*).

Text: Matthew 6:25-34

Worry and anxiety are among the great instruments the Devil uses to afflict, torment and oppress people. To worry is to keep thinking about the unfavorable events of the past or the problems we are encountering at the moment and unpleasant things which may happen in the future. Anxiety is the state of feeling nervous or worried that something bad is going to happen. Our Lord Jesus Christ, in our text, states that there is no cause for a Christian youth to entertain worry and anxiety. He establishes that what causes worry and anxiety are of secondary importance to life itself and these are what unbelievers are running after.

Q.1 What is the first thing a sinning youth should seek for according to Matthew 6:33? _____

Many sinning youths today have unsettled minds. They are anxious about life and impatient to have their dreams fulfilled. They worry over many things but do not bother to consider something of immediate importance: the kingdom of God and its righteousness.

Q.2: State the causes of worry and anxiety according to the following references:

(i) Matthew 14:22-26; II Kings 6:15

(ii) Daniel 3:15

(iii) Matthew 6:25

(iv) Genesis 37:18-20, 24, 28

There are some adverse situations a Christian youth may experience in life which can cause worry and anxiety. He may be rejected by his earthly parents or they may not be able to render much assistance to him. His life may be in danger or he may face threat from unbelievers. He may experience academic failure, delay in getting admission into higher institutions, loss or bereavement, persecution or sickness. Giving in to worry and anxiety will wreck havoc on such Christian youth.

Q.3: What are the consequences of worry and anxiety in a believer's life?

(i) _____ (ii) _____

(iii) _____ (iv) _____

Worry and anxiety can lead to a mood of melancholy, create the image of fear, misery, sorrow, self-pity and depression. Faith is removed and unbelief comes in. Blessing could be delayed or denied out rightly.

Q.4: How can a Christian youth overcome worry and anxiety according to the following references?

(i) Isaiah 26:3,4 _____

(ii) Matthew 14:27; II Kings 6:16 _____

(iii) John 5:39 _____

(iv) Philippians 4:6-7 _____

Have absolute trust and confidence in God. Be cheerful. Do not be afraid. Believe that God is able to meet all your needs in all situations. Have faith that God will help you, and keep you in the hour of temptation and from falling. Believe that God can change your past failure to success and your present misery to miracle. Read the Bible and search out those promises that pertain to your specific needs. Finally, pray always and cast your care upon Him because He cares for you (I Peter 5:7).

STUDY 7

DEVOTION AND DEDICATION OF DANIEL

Memory Verse: “Then said these men, we shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.” (*Daniel 6:5*)

Text: Daniel 6:1-10

Most of the life of Daniel was spent in captivity in Babylon. His unflinching commitment to the service of God and unquestionable conduct under several trying situations present a worthy example for youths today. It is, therefore, not surprising that God protected him, preserved and highly promoted him. Such can also be our portion today if we simply emulate the life of Daniel.

Q.1: From the following passages what major characteristics were found in Daniel's life?

(i) Daniel 1:8 _____

(ii) Daniel 9:20 _____

(iii) Daniel 9:3 _____

(iv) Daniel 6:4 _____

Daniel devoted his life to prayer, for himself and other people. He did not hesitate to fast so as to get desired answers to prayers. Some youths today feel too young to join in fasting and prayers. This should not be so. Daniel, also, committed himself to service even at the risk of his life. He remained faithful to God without being influenced by the environment he found himself, he also acted wisely in situations.

Q.2: What are the results of a life of genuine devotion and dedication to God according to the following passages?

(i) Daniel 1:19-20 _____

(ii) Daniel 2: 48-49 _____

(iii) Daniel 6:26 _____

(iv) Daniel 6:28 _____

Devotion and dedication to God amidst all odds tend to excellence in our academic and other life endeavors. There is promotion for ourselves and our friends. While such commitments may attract criticisms at first, they can end up in a revival as even a persecutor can be won to Christ. Long life, prosperity and answers to prayers will always result from such a life of total commitment to God and refusal to compromise no matter the circumstance.

Q.3: What was the underlying principle behind Daniel's successful life of devotion and dedication to God?

Daniel made a firm commitment by purposing within himself never to compromise. This underlying principle saw him through the encounter with Ashpenaz the prince of Eunuchs, Nebuchadnezzar himself, Belshazzar and detractors during the reign of Darius. He consistently fasted and prayed to overcome every obstacle, many youths rarely get into fasting and prayer, others do for the wrong reasons while some cannot even pray. Here lies the challenge the consecration and dedication of Daniel made him an all-round success. Dare to be a Daniel today.

STUDY 8

FRUITS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Memory verse: “That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (*Philippians 2:15*).

Text: Ephesians 4:22-32; Galatians 5:22-23

Righteousness, as used in the Bible, is another word for holiness. It is that quality of life that results from genuine conversion and acceptance of Christ as one’s Lord and Savior (II Corinthians 5:17). Without it, all claims of relationship with God are baseless, false and pretentious (Matthew 7:16, 21). As can be seen from our text, scriptural righteousness affects all aspects of an individual’s life. It is not attained by any act of self-reformation but imparted to us by God at salvation. No wonder the Bible calls it “the righteousness of God” (Romans 10:3)

Q.1 From Titus 2:11-12, how can a sinner obtain this kind of righteousness?

When one gets genuinely born-again, he obtains the righteousness of God through the grace that brings salvation. Sadly, however, some youths prefer “going about to establish their own righteousness” rather than “Submitting themselves to the righteousness of God” (Romans 10:3). Their lives are characterized by various acts of self-righteousness.

Q.2: Identify some acts of self-righteousness from these references.

(i) Matthew 6:1 _____

(ii) Matthew 6:5 _____

(iii) Matthew 6:16 _____

(iv) II Timothy 3:5 _____

Many, hypocritically, adopt Christian dressing, saintly language, gentle conduct, noisy praying, and other external pious acts without real conversion. This is self-righteousness, which does no one any good (Philippians 3:9).

Q.3: What is the final end of the self-righteous according to Revelation 20:15?

When the righteousness of God resides in us it must be evident from the type of life we live. Our lives must daily produce fruits of righteousness.

Q.4: From these passages, enumerate some of the fruits of righteousness

(i) Ephesians 4:25 _____

(ii) II Corinthians 5:17 _____

(iii) Ephesians 4:29 _____

(iv) Ephesians 4:31 _____

(v) Ephesians 4:32 _____

We are not born-again unless our lives produce fruits of righteousness on daily basis. These include truth both in public and private; faithfulness in all our dealings, honesty and sincerity, saintly language, kindness, friendliness and absence of quarrelling among others. The Bible summarizes it thus: "The Fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23). What fruits are you producing?

STUDY 9

KEEPING AND MAINTAINING A COTTAGE BUSINESS

Memory verse: “In all labor there is profit:
but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury”
(Proverbs 14:23).

Texts: Ecclesiastes 9:10; Proverbs 22:29

The Bible enjoins us to be industrious. God, Himself, gave the first man work to do. Indeed, the Lord is against laziness. He wants us to be diligent in all we do. “And the Lord God, took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and keep it” (Genesis 2:15). Indeed the Lord is against laziness, He wants us to be diligent in all we do. There are opportunities for everyone, including youths, to excel in cottage business. Cottage business, in this study, refers to small scale business enterprise. There is, however, need to be hardworking as you keep and maintain a cottage business, you will, no doubt, benefit from it because “In all labor, there is profit . . . : (Proverbs 14:23)

Q.1 (a) What is cottage business? _____

(b) Mention four cottage businesses that can be done in your environment:

(i) _____

(ii) _____

(iii) _____

(iv) _____

Among the common cottage businesses are soap making, washing and ironing of clothes, ice cream production, weaving, and jigger production. A few hands are required to work on these. One must, however, be well trained in them before getting involved. The level of your knowledge or training will reflect in the quality of your production. In

addition to being trained, one needs to carry out a feasibility and viability study. This deals with: (a) the possibility or practicability of the business in the area being considered for it, and; (b) its profitability by considering the cost vis-a-vis the return from it. Under this study, you consider the fund available, the source of raw materials needed, the market for the finished products and other overhead cost such as transportation.

Q.2: What do you understand by “keeping and maintaining as used in our title? _____

It may be easy to start a business, but special care is required to maintain it.

Q. 3: From the following references, state how one can maintain a cottage business:

(i) Proverbs 10:4 _____

(ii) II Kings 12:15 _____

(iii) Deuteronomy 25:15 _____

Cottage business can be done on a full-time basis by ex-students or youths who do not have opportunity of formal education. It can also be on part-time by all classes of youths. The benefits of keeping and maintaining cottage business include: self-sustenance, respect from people, joy of being employed, provision of employment for others, and contribution to the national economy. Be a responsible individual. Make efforts and think of excellence only. Have a sense of purpose today and you will keep it without fail.

STUDY 10

ALMOST PERSUADED?

Memory Verse: “Then Agrippa said unto Paul, almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (Acts 26:28)

Text: Acts 24:24, 25; 26:27-30

Opportunities and privileges come to everybody’s way at one time or the other. Such privileges are either used or misused. The greatest privilege one can have in one’s lifetime, of course, is to be told of the need to accept Jesus Christ, be born-again and by so doing, become qualified for heaven. Such opportunity must never be wasted, ignored or even postponed. The reason is obvious: our response determines where we will spend eternity. **“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”** (Matthew 16:26).

Q1: From these references, why must one respond urgently and positively to the Gospel call?

(i) Hebrew 9:27 _____

(ii) I Thessalonians 5:1, 2 _____

(iii) 2 Corinthians 6:1.2 _____

Neither Governor Felix nor King Agrippa, as seen from our text, realized that he was living a borrowed life. Both had the rare privilege of listening to the gospel from the greatest preacher of their time. They were both convinced of the reality of hell and judgment. Felix even trembled with fear as the fact of eternity dawned on him. But alas, they postponed their day of salvation and we are never told that the privilege came again!

Q2: From these references, identify others who wasted their opportunity to be saved

(i) Luke 24:39-43 _____

(ii) Mark 10:17-23 _____

(iii) Acts 13:44-46 _____

Like Felix, Agrippa, the rich young ruler and the Jews in Antioch in Pisidia, many youths are putting off their salvation till “**a convenient season**” which may never come. They are convinced that “**the soul that sinneth, it shall die**” (Ezekiel 18:4). They know that immorality, violence, deception, theft, reveling, gambling, worldliness, etc., are acts of sin (I Corinthians 6:9, 10). They equally know that death and the rapture are constant realities. Yet, they linger in their sin. Are you in this category? You are the almost persuaded; and except you hurriedly get totally persuaded, you might be lost forever.

Q3: How can the almost persuaded youth escape the danger of hell?

(i) Psalm 51:3 _____

(ii) Proverbs 28:13 _____

(iii) Acts 2:37,38 _____

(iv) Romans 10:9, 10 _____

Do not make today another day of rebellion and hardness of heart. You never can tell whether this is your last chance. Acknowledge your sinfulness, repent of your sins, confess and forsake them and accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Do that **now**, and you shall be saved.

STUDY 11

CHRISTIAN DRESSING

Memory verse: “Unto Adam also and to his wife did the *LORD* God make coats of skins, and clothed them” (*Genesis 3:21*).

Text: Isaiah 3:16-24

All creatures need insulation from direct sunlight and adverse weathers. To this effect, animals have furs, scales, shells, etc. and plants have barks. When Adam and Eve realized their need of dressing, they sewed leafy aprons which could not cover them well (*Genesis 3:7*). God saw that His purpose for dressing had been compromised by the inadequate aprons. He therefore came to their aid “and clothed them” (*Genesis 3:21*). This further shows that in addition to insulation purposes, God wants to see man, the crown of His creation, well-dressed.

Q.1 Tick right the two statements that summarize the scriptural purpose of dressing

To add to our beauty.

To demonstrate our wealth.

To protect ourselves from adverse weathers.

To attract the notice of others.

To cover our nakedness.

To gain the fancy of the opposite sex.

Essential as dressing is, sinful youths have corrupted its noble purpose like the Israelites of Isaiah’s days (*Isaiah 3:18-23*). They dress to expose, rather than cover their nakedness. Boys and girls go about in unbecoming apparels like underwear, shorts, perforated dresses, skintight dresses, chains, headbands, wristbands, earrings, high-heel shoes, sportswear that display obscene and lustful inscriptions, etc. Many, especially girls, bleach themselves, wear seductive hairdo, put on slacks, and paint their faces, fingernails and toenails. Some even apply artificial nails, thus making themselves animals like Nebuchadnezzar (*Daniel 4:33*). Certain boys leave their hair uncut and

unkempt while some even weave theirs. Little do these youths know of the judgement of God awaiting them.

Q2. From Deuteronomy 22:5 and Revelation 21:27, what is the ultimate consequence of ungodly dressing?

If these fashion-crazy youths were all atheists there would have been little to worry about. Sadly enough many youths professing to be born-again are involved. They even attend church services in such postures. But the Bible is very clear about what should constitute a Christians dressing.

Q3: From these references, what principles should guide Christian youths in their choice of dressing?

(i) I John 2:15-17 _____

(ii) I Corinthians 6:20 _____

(iii) Exodus 20:26 _____

(iv) Deuteronomy 22:5 _____

(v) I Timothy 2:9; I Peter 3:2-4 _____

Christians are to shun worldly vanities, competitions and pride in their dressing. We are to seek the glory of God only, for that is why we are created. Our nakedness must be adequately covered. Dresses meant for the opposite sex must be avoided. Articles that promote immodesty are unchristian. These include chains, earrings, gold-plated buttons, gold-plated wristwatch latches, gold-embedded handbags, and belts with golden knobs.

STUDY 12

LESSONS FROM YOUNG JOSEPH

Memory verse: “And the *LORD* was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian”
(*Genesis 39:2*)

Text: Genesis 39:1-12

Joseph was sold by his brothers into Egypt. He had no relations in there. But he stood up for the Lord and righteousness even though there was nobody to encourage him. The Bible says “And the Lord was with Joseph” He resisted the temptation of Potiphar’s wife to commit sin. He was conscious of the all-seeing God. He said “how can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” wherever we are, we are not alone if we have given our lives to Christ. We should live in the consciousness that God is looking at us and live a life worthy of him.

Q1. According to the following verses in Genesis Chapter 39, what lessons do we learn from the life of Joseph?

verse 2 _____

verse 3 _____

verses 4-6 _____

verses 7-8 _____

Joseph had divine favor upon his life. He was hardworking and committed to labor. He was a good person and he resisted temptation to do evil. Joseph feared God above temporal pleasure and ran away from evil and sin. He also had a forgiving spirit; he had grace to overlook what his brother did to him. God can help youths today to live and comport their lives to please the Lord.

Q2. How can a youth begin to enjoy God’s presence in his life?

Salvation from sin is the beginning of enjoying God's presence in your life. God's presence is enjoyed by youths who genuinely repent and surrender their lives to Christ. When Joseph was at home in his country, God did not desert him. When he was sent away from his father and beloved home and was sold for a slave, God stood by him. When our ways please the Lord, He makes even our enemies to be at peace with us.

Q3: What helped Joseph to overcome the temptations of Potiphar's wife? _____

Joseph feared God and hated evil. He rejected incessant invitation to sin, since he recognized that God was always with him watching his actions. We, as Christian youths today, can overcome sin like Joseph. We can achieve and attain higher height and great accomplishment through hard work. God has given us promises and by His grace we too can live an overcoming life.

Q4: What promises has God given to assure youths today that we can indeed overcome temptations?

(i) James 1:12 _____

(ii) Hebrews 2:18 _____

(iii) Hebrews 4:15-16 _____

(iv) I Corinthians 10:13 _____

God has promised to make grace available for those who are going through temptation. There is a way of escape from every temptation that a youth has to face. He also promised strength and succor in times of temptation. There is always light at the end of the tunnel. Whatever trials and temptations we are facing, God who saw Joseph through will always give us victory.

STUDY 13

POWER FOR SERVICE

Memory verse: “For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost” (*I Thessalonians 1:5 a*)

Text: Matthew 10:1, 7-8, 19-20; Acts 6:3, 5, 8:6-8

A Christian youth ought to preach the gospel to everyone at his reach in the school, neighborhood or even in the church (Matthew 28:18-19). Apart from this, he/she can invite friends to programs where they can be saved (John 1:45), and be an intercessor (Colossians 4:12), sing in the choir (I Samuel 16:23), visit other believer, (Acts 15:36), and follow up converts (Acts 14:21-22). All these are areas we can serve in God’s vineyard. None of these can, however, be done effectively without the power of God.

Q1: Recall the areas of service available for a Christian Youth in the church / fellowship

- (i) _____
- (ii) _____
- (iii) _____
- (iv) _____
- (v) _____
- (vi) _____

Jesus, when He sent the twelve out to preach, did not take things for granted. “He gave them power “Matthew 10:1, When He was leaving, He told them “And behold I send the promise of my father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high” Luke 24:49. In the early church also, when there was need for those to serve tables, the seven men that filled the gap were “full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom” (Acts 6:3). No wonder then that the work thrived both in the earthly ministry of Jesus and the early church. In our service for

God, if we will witness what they witnessed, we must do it the way they did it-in the power of the Spirit.

Q2: According to the following scriptures, mention the Bible characters that served God effectively through God's power and what they did

i) Acts 4:31,33 _____

ii) Acts 8:5-8 _____

ii) I Samuel 16:23 _____

iii) I Thessalonians 1:5,6,9 _____

God's promises, which are yea and Amen, also include the infilling with the Holy Ghost power for those willing to do service for God in these last days.

Q3: Give three (3) passages of scriptures where God promised to fill us with the Holy Ghost power for service.

(i) _____

(ii) _____

(iii) _____

(Numbers 23:19). There is no reason why we cannot receive this enduement with power for service; if only we will take care to fulfil the conditions attached.

Q4: What conditions must be fulfilled by a Christian youth to receive the infilling of the Holy Spirit with the power for service?

(i) _____ (ii) _____

(iii) _____ (iv) _____

God is ever ready to fill any saved and sanctified youth who is thirsty after this power for service if he/she will pray earnestly in faith. It can even happen now.

STUDY 14

IT SHALL BE A BRIGHT FUTURE

Memory verse: “Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase”
(Job 8:7)

Text: Isaiah 43:18-19; Psalm 105:17-22

There are times when we find ourselves wrapped up in dark gloomy circumstance which tend to becloud the future. At such times, however, we must remember that God has great plans and prospects awaiting us. When we are in a state of helplessness and hopelessness, God has good and important challenge for us. Associated with Christian youths, who have faith in Christ, are great prospects and promise of a bright future.

Q1. What are some dark and cloudy situations that sometimes make a youth doubt the promise of a bright future?

(i) _____ (ii) _____

(iii) _____ (iv) _____

(v) _____ (vi) _____

There are youths who have failed their examinations, and there are some who have not succeeded in getting admission into higher institution after many years of trying. Some are burdened and weighed down by some diseases, some have no financial strength to continue their education. There are youths in the Bible, who in spite of their background and situation in life, still realized the promise of the bright future.

Q2: From the following scriptures mention some youths in the Bible, who in spite of the circumstances of their days, attained God’s promise of a bright future

(i) Daniel 2:48 _____

(ii) Genesis 41:39-4 _____

(iii) I Chronicles 4:9-10 _____

(iv) II Chronicles 34:1 _____

Daniel went to Babylon as a captive and yet became a mighty man in Babylon. Joseph was sold to Egypt as a slave and he became second in command. Josiah was born at a difficult time in the history of Judah, the nation was corrupt and the worship of the true God replaced with idolatrous worship, yet, he did what was right in the eyes of God and he was successful as a king in Judah. Your future definitely is as bright as the promises of God. No matter your present circumstances, your dreams and visions of a bright future will be realized.

Q3: From the following scriptures, mention the promises of God that assure us of a bright future

(i) Job 8:7 _____

(ii) Job 23:14 _____

(iii) Deuteronomy 28:13 _____

(iv) Isaiah 43:18-19 _____

The promise of God will not fail. They give the assurance of successful achievement and attainments. Believe God to fulfil His promises in your life and walk on to a successful and fulfilled future.

STUDY 15

THE MANAGEMENT FOR ALL ROUND SUCCESS

Memory Verse: “Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time”
(*Colossians 4.5*)

Text: Ephesians 5:15-17; Ecclesiastes 11:4-6

Time management is a careful planning of time to ensure that no time is wasted on nothing or unnecessary things. Life itself, is tied to time management because a wasted time is actually a wasted life. Youths are often guilty of time wasting, either by doing the right thing at the wrong time, doing things that are of no value or not doing anything at all. Our memory verse warns us against time wasting and enjoins us to redeem the time, in order to achieve an all-round success.

Q1: Mention things that youths do that amount to time wasting

(i) _____ (ii) _____

(iii) _____ (iv) _____

(v) _____ (vi) _____

Time management demands wisdom, and indeed, it takes a wise student to know what to do and when to do it. Academic success eludes many because they are unable to carefully plan their time so that every activity has its time allotment. Some students waste their time playing cards, games, watching television, surfing the internet, texting, twitting or playing video games. Others stay late at nights browsing the Internet and watching videos while others engage in aimless visitations. To others, it is idling away with unserious people with jokes and so called relaxation?

Q2: What does time management involve?

Time management has a procedure such as:

(i) determining one's essential daily activities; (ii) identifying priority work areas; (iii) working out a time plan in which specific time is allotted to every activity; (iv) ensuring that more time is given to more difficult tasks. This provides a plan that helps a student do the right thing at the right time, ensuring that no subject is unwittingly neglected. It also provides for siesta or rest.

Q3: How can we effectively plan our times?

To a good student a workable timetable is a practical way of demonstrating time management. This type of timetable is personal and deliberately prepared, different from the general school timetable. It is flexible and adjustable especially during examination time, to make for proper preparation. Time planning is what any serious minded student can do and with this study, we are given practical steps to good time management.

Q4: What lessons do we learn from our text about time management?

Idleness is a sin and the Lord frowns at those that waste their time, because they waste their lives. Only fools misuse their time and the will of God for all Christian youths is that they use their time profitably.

STUDY 16

MORE THAN CONQUERORS

Memory verse: “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.” (*Romans 8:37*)

Text: Romans 8:31-39

A conqueror is an overcomer. And when something is said to be ‘more than’ anything in English, it means it’s greater than that thing both in value and utility. Believers are more than conquerors and that is to say that we are even greater than overcomers. We talk of conquering in the context of conflict and warfare. Since the Christian life is full of warfare. The devil opposes everything about the Christian faith and works night and day to discourage believers through trials and temptations (James 1.2-4; 1Peter 4.12-13), but the Lord assures us that “in all these things we are more than conquerors” (Romans 8:37; 11 Peter 2.9).

Q1: Who is a conqueror? _____

Persecutions, trials and temptations a common experiences of believers (2 Timothy 3:12) and the purpose is to produce righteousness in us. Trials are like a refining fire that proves the quality of our confidence and trust in God. When we are tried and tested and we overcome and God calls us conquerors.

Q2: Mention some areas where Christian youths are mostly tempted or tried

(i) _____ (ii) _____

(iii) _____ (iv) _____

Usually, one is tempted on the basis of his age, status, life-style or personal values, and youths are mostly susceptible (prone) to the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and pride of life. Temptations to examination malpractices, immorality, compromise, blasphemy or denial of Christ are invitations

to sin, which a true believer should reject out rightly “Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin” (1 John 3.9). But trials of faith such as ill health, failures, afflictions, denial of legitimate rights, ridicules or even beatings are other kinds of ‘temptations’, which believers of- ten suffer for Christ sake.

Q3: What should be a believer’s attitude during trials and temptations with reference to the following scriptures?

1 Peter 4:13,16 _____

Romans 12:14 _____

James 4:13 _____

James 4:7-8 _____

Our response to trials and temptations is very important. In fact it shows our level of maturity. But as a general rule, persecuted Christian youths should draw closer to God, and pray fervently; they should also pray for and bless their persecutors and rejoice for being partakers of Christ’s sufferings. The promise of God for those who re- main conquerors is a crown of life.

STUDY 17

SELF DENIAL OF A CONSECRATED YOUTH

Memory verse: “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves”
(Philippians 2:3)

Text: Philippians 2:5-8

Self-denial means deliberately allowing one- self to be denied of what is right and legitimate because one considers the well-being of others better than oneself. It is an important Christian virtue that is similar to self-abasement, meekness, self-denial means deliberately allowing oneself to be denied of what is right and legitimate because one considers the well-being of others better than oneself. It is an important Christian virtue that is similar to self-abasement, meekness and humility. Self-denial is a character of Christ “*Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*” (Philippians 2:6-8). A self-denying Christian youth would sometimes allow himself to be cheated, give up his seat on the bus for an elder, permit someone else to take up his position when necessary for their own good. It also means putting Jesus and His word first in our lives.

Q1: What is self-denial? _____

The beauty of self-denial is in entire consecration. Consecration enables a Christian youth to see himself as an instrument of blessing to others because he is set apart for sacred use. To a consecrated youth nothing is too great or important to give up for Christ. God occupies the first place in his life; thus, he is in a continuous readiness to deny self for his Lord.

Q2: How does consecration enhance self-denial?

Self-denial sees the needs of others the way Christ sees them. The Lord took our place and became poor that we might be rich. He was totally sub- mitted to the will of the Father. Similarly, a consecrated youth gives all to God and by so doing, self is perpetually crucified.

Q3: From the following Scripture references, mention the Bible characters who practiced self-denial and the act of self-denial.

(i) Philippians 2:6-8 _____

(ii) Philippians 3:7-8 _____

(iii) Philippians 2:25-30 _____

(iv) Colossians 4:12 _____

Q4: How can a Christian youth practically demonstrate self-denial in the following situations?

- When only few seats are available in the district church

- At home, when eating meals with your younger ones and sometimes food is not sufficient _____

- When you have to choose between evangelism and rest

- When someone asks for a little and you feel you don't have enough _____

The above situations call for self-denial, and it is not until there is an opportunity to demonstrate self-denial that one can claim to have it. Self- denying Christian youth will easily give up his seat when the church increases and runs out of seats. He will readily surrender his meal for his younger ones if it is not sufficient. He will choose to serve God in spite of an option of rest. Are you a consecrated youth? Do you have self-denial?

STUDY 18

THE LAW AND YOU

Memory verse: “Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.” (*Romans 13:7*).

Text: Romans 13:1-7; I Peter 2:13-17

Law is a system of rules, which citizens of a country or place must obey. It is based on the constitution of a state and spells out what people should do and what they should not do. Obedience to the law ensures peace and social coexistence among people of different races, customs and tongues. It also guarantees civil privileges to law-abiding citizens. Legitimate leadership of a state has divine backing to punish law breakers and reward patriotic citizens. It is clear from our text that God favors good citizenship and specifically commands us to be subject to civil authorities. (Romans 13:1).

Q1: Why is law important in a society? _____

God is involved in civil leadership and actually influences the selection of those in authority. Therefore obedience and loyalty to our parents, the school authority and state governors is the will of God. These levels of leadership are the various ordinances of man, which we are to submit ourselves to (1 Peter 2:13). When we obey our parents at home, teachers/master at school and work and political leaders in the state, we are obeying God, because they are God’s representatives.

Q2: Mention the categories of authority in the following:

(i) Home _____

(ii) School _____

(iii) Church _____

(iv) Society _____

Christian youths ought to be good citizens. They should be a model of patriotism and good citizenship. To be patriotic means that an individual loves his country and is practically committed to promoting peace, harmony and justice. He does not involve himself in riots and destruction of public property; he will not vandalize public infrastructure or waste social amenities like pipe-borne water, oil pipes or electric installations. He will not deliberately evade civic duties like paying school fees and levies. He is not the type that will destroy school property, jump the fence and steal library books. He does not avoid leaders and speak evil of them; he rather prays for them. All his efforts are directed towards social wellbeing and defense of the rights of the less privileged. The important fact for believing youths to note is that the civil law in most societies has its foundation in the Bible, hence, it is in line with the law of God.

Q3: From these references how should believers respond to civil authority?

a. I Peter 2:13-14 _____

b. I Timothy 2:1-3 _____

c. I Peter 2:17 _____

d. Acts 23:5b _____

As believers we are to submit ourselves to secular ordinances as long as God's standard is not undermined by such laws. We are to honor the rulers even in our private discussions. We should constantly pray for them also. This is the Bible standard for Christians. Many blessings are associated with obedience to leaders. We enjoy peace when we love and pray for our leaders; there is honor and promotion; prosperity and praise and we are sure that we are in the center of the will of God.

STUDY 19

POWER IN PURITY

Memory Verse: “Blessed are the pure in heart:
for they shall see God” (*Matthew 5:8*)

Text: Romans 6:18-23

Purity means living a holy life. This is a life without evil thoughts, actions or motives. It is characterized by perfect love, unity with the brethren and obedience to the word of God. Unfortunately, many youths’ habits, conduct, conversations or dressing tell of their impurity and imperfection of life.

Q1: What are the characteristics of a pure youth?

(i) _____ (ii) _____

(iii) _____ (iv) _____

(v) _____ (vi) _____

Any youth who lives an impure life is exposed to danger such as diseases, satanic attack or oppression (Exodus 12:29-30). His prayers would be hindered (Psalm 66:18). Finally, he is in danger of spending his eternity in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15).

Q2: How can a sinning youth obtain purity of life according to the following scripture references?

I Thessalonians 5:22, II Timothy 2:21

Romans 12:1,2; John 13:12-17 _____

Mark 11:24 _____

Purity of life starts at salvation and becomes abundant at sanctification. A dirty youth cannot obtain purity of life by his own human efforts. The actual committed sins are washed away by the blood of Jesus Christ when a

sinning youth acknowledge his sinfulness, confesses and forsakes them and accepts Christ as his Lord and Savior. Afterwards, he must totally withdraw himself from all sins. He must be entirely consecrated to the glory of God. Finally, he must pray in faith.

Q3: What are the benefits of a pure life from the following references?

Psalm 91:9-11 _____

Psalm 91:15 _____

Psalm 91:16 _____

I Thessalonians 4:16-17 _____

Purity of life is always followed by supernatural power. Such power was available to Enoch, Joshua, Caleb, Joseph, Samuel, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego and many others so much that their enemies and sinners around them were convicted of their sins and wickedness. A youth who lives a pure life in a dirty environment would bring souls into the kingdom of God through his transparent living. Also, as Elijah prayed and signs and wonders followed (James 5:17-18), miracles would always follow the prayers of a righteous youth. Such a youth will be protected from all evil. He will be satisfied with long life, and above all he will inherit eternal life. (I Thessalonians 4:16-17).

STUDY 20

NECESSARY PREPARATION FOR COLLEGE CAMPUS LIFE

Memory verse: “or which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?” (Luke 14:28).

Text: Luke 14:28-32

The college campus to a new student is a completely different environment where freedom apparently abounds and where choice of what to do is largely his/hers. Several college campus students therefore commit themselves to various things because of the unchecked freedom. Some get too conscious of Academic, some politics, some partying, some business, some unionism and association, some cultism, some social life and some religion.

Q1: Mention some of the activities on college campus that students get involved in?

- (i) _____ (ii) _____
(iii) _____ (iv) _____
(v) _____ (vi) _____
(vii) _____ (viii) _____

Lack of proper guidance and preparation often lead to failure. There have been painful cases of good Christian students who on getting to the campus make shipwreck of their faith. Others who were first class materials end up as failures and dropouts. This ought not to be so. God’s will for us is to excel on campus and remain Christians. As we go into the campus, proper preparation will prevent us from performing poorly Part of the preparation is to decide on what to do.

Q2: What necessary decisions should we make concerning our spiritual life on campus? According to the following scriptures

- Daniel 1:8

- Psalm 119: 9, 11
- I Thessalonians 5:17
- Hebrew 10:25

You need to make up your mind before you get into the college that you will not defile yourself with the sinful practices on college campus. You must also decide on your life-style on campus. It ought to be a life-style regulated by God's word, a life-style of prayer. As soon as you get in, make up your mind to identify with a Bible believing fellowship such as the Deeper Life campus fellow- ship (DLCF). The DLCF, among other things, will help to keep you on spiritually. It also offers guidance and help academically through group discussions and success programs.

Q3: What points should a Christian note in his/her social and financial life on Campus?

- (i) _____ (ii) _____
 (iii) _____ (iv) _____

As a Christian student, be a good example. Where you do not have a sponsor, pray and plan on what to do to earn some living while on campus.

There are four groups of students on our college campuses, they are

- (i) Those who are dead spiritually and sound academically
- (ii) Those who are dead both spiritually and academically
- (iii) Those who are sound spiritually and dead academically
- (iv) Those who are sound both spiritually and academically.

Prepare to be in the last group. The last group are those that are balanced. To be balanced you must plan a workable timetable and follow it. If you are not used to this, you must develop that habit before you get in. This is part of the preparation you are to make. You must cultivate the habit of studying, praying, disciplining yourself to do the right thing at the right time. This will turn out to be an asset to you on campus.

STUDY 21

THE DANGER OF BEING SILENT SAINTS

Memory verse: “When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand” (*Ezekiel 3:18*)

Text: Ezekiel 3:17-21; Isaiah 56:10-11

It is worthy of note that there are many Christian youths who are genuinely saved, singing in the choir and engaged in various activities in their congregations. Some are also officers/executives in their school fellowships doing quite a number of good things. It is however sad to note that many of these Christians (saints) are silent when it comes to telling others about the Gospel. This is because they do not know that being a silent saint is dangerous.

Q1: In the context of our study, who is a silent saint?

Q2: Why is it dangerous to be a silent saint at this time?

Ezekiel 3:18 _____

Kings 7:9; _____

Matthew 25: 24, 26, 30 _____

If we fail in our responsibility to preach the Gospel, the sinners will die in their sin but their blood will be required from our hands. Our hands will not be clean. Note that it takes a clean hand to ascend into the hill of the Lord (Psalm 24:3, 4). It may not be impossible that some tempests in the lives of many youths today is as a result of not preaching as we saw in the case of Jonah. The Lord, therefore, is unhappy with those who are not involved in evangelism. However, it must be understood that the Christians responsibility is only to preach; it is the Holy Spirit's responsibility to convert. We cannot do the work of the Spirit for Him (John 16:7-11).

Q3: What does the Lord want those who have stopped preaching to do? According to Revelation 2:4-5

(i) Rem__ __ ber (ii) Re__ __ nt (iii) R __p__nt

It is important we remember how we started. How we zealously preached the Gospel in the past. If we are no longer as zealous and active, we need preaching the Gospel into our daily schedule, tracts should find their way back into our bags. In our quiet time and family devotions, we must not forget prayer points on evangelism. While deliberate efforts must be made to team up with like-minded believers to reach out to the lost. The secret of achievement is to start right away.

Q4: What is the reward of obedience to the injunction to preach the Gospel according to the following scriptures?

Psalm 126: 5-6; _____

Jonah, 3:3 _____

2Timothy 4 ;8 _____

Daniel 12:3 _____

When we faithfully preach this Gospel, many will turn to the Lord and be saved. If anyone will not yield, we'll be freed from their blood.

STUDY 22

THE BEAUTIFUL LIFE

Memory verse: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”
(*Matthew 5:16*).

Text: I Peter 1:14-19, 22-23

Holiness is the nature of God. How beautiful it is then to live a life of holiness. Indeed, the Lord commands that, as His children, we should live a life of holiness (Leviticus 11:44). Christ prayed and even died that we might be sanctified, that is, made holy or purified (John 17:17; Hebrews 13:12). To be sanctified and have a pure heart is to live a life free from sin. It is a blameless and spotless life, a life cleansed from moral corruption and pollution. By this, we become perfect. It is a beautiful life to perpetually live in such an experience, which comes after one is genuinely born again.

Q1a: Holiness is the nature of God. Confirm this with two scripture references.

(i) _____ (ii) _____

1b: What does it mean to ‘live a life of holiness’?

Sanctification, the second definite work of grace, is received by faith in the blood of Jesus Christ. It is not obtainable by works or struggle rather it is an instantaneous experience given to believers after genuine conversion. When a believer is sanctified, he is able to cleave to God without the tendency to go astray or go away from the Lord. He loves God with his entire being (Deuteronomy 30:6).

Q2: From these verses what are some of the evidences of a sanctified life?

- Job 31:1
- Luke 23:34

- Mark 12:30, 32

Everyone who desires sanctification can experience it. For a sinner, he must first be born again by repenting of his sins and accepting Christ Jesus as Lord and savior. As a believer, he must entirely consecrate his life and service to God. By this, all he is and have are dedicated to God. This does not however mean he should abandon his studies (as a student) or training (as an apprentice).

Q3: From the following references, state the means by which a believer can be sanctified.

- John 15:3
- Hebrews 13:12, 13
- Acts 26:18
- I Thessalonians 5:23

We can be sanctified today and be made holy because it is the will of God for all believers. (I Thessalonians 4:3-4). The Bible tells us that it is with holiness or pure heart that we can see God (Hebrew 12:14; Matthew 5:8). Here on earth, we will experience oneness and unity with one another. This is what Christ prayed for in John 17:15-23. It is indeed a “Beautiful Life” to be sanctified.

STUDY 23

FORGIVING LIKE CHRIST

Memory verse: “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you”
(Ephesians 4:32)

Text: Matthew 18:21-35

Forgiveness is the act of pardoning, that is, setting free from punishment or canceling of debts. As we interact together, we are bound to offend one another. But when offences come, the Bible enjoins the offended to forgive the offender. Christ in our text gives us illustration on what forgiveness means and how to forgive. He demonstrated it in His earthly ministry (Luke 7:47). Even on the cross, He forgave His persecutors “Father forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

Q1: Define the following words:

- Offence
- Offender
- The Offended

When someone offends us, we naturally feel pain. In a loving manner, however, we should let the offender know what he has done “if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him” (Luke 17:3). If he acknowledges it and repents we are to forgive him there and then (Luke 17:3, 4) Never hold the offence against him anymore. This will strengthen the relationship that had existed.

Q2: On what basis should we forgive and how often should it be? Support your answer with bible reference

(i) _____

Christ forgave and still forgives today by His mercy and love. These should form the basis of our forgiving others (Titus 3:3-7).

Q3: From the following references, mention Bible characters who forgave their offenders:

- Genesis 50 : 17,20 and 21
- Luke 23: 34
- Acts 7 : 59-60

Q4: According to the following references what is the consequence of not forgiving our offenders?

- Matthew 6: 15
- Matthew 18: 34-35
- Mark 11:25-26

Christ warns us that the heavenly father will not forgive us if we fail to forgive others (Matthew 18:35; 6:15). The result of this is punishment in hell.

STUDY 24

THE URGENCY OF OUR TASK

Memory verse: “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work” (*John 9:4*)

Text: John 4:5-8; 25-35

Two words stand out in this study. They are urgency and task. Something is urgent when it demands our quick or immediate response. Such things cannot be delayed, deferred or postponed. A task is an assignment or responsibility, which must be carried out. As believers, we have an urgent task given to us by the Lord Himself. From our text, the Lord Jesus Christ neglected personal convenience and considered the preaching of the Gospel more important.

Q1: From Mark 16:15, what is our task as believers?

Jesus said “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). Our task therefore is to tell others about Christ and lead them to Him.

Q2: From the following passages why is the task of soul winning an urgent one?

- Romans 13 : 11
- Hebrews 9 : 27
- 1 Corinthians 7 : 29

Firstly, the fact that anyone can die at any time should spur us into action as there is no repentance in the grave. Secondly, the rapture is very imminent. Thirdly, the passing nature of opportunities should compel us. Opportunities are either seized as they come or they are lost forever. You will not always have your current classmates, schoolmates and playmates around you as you have them now. This time is an opportunity to reach out to them.

Q3: Why do many born-again youths avoid soul winning?

(i) _____

(ii) _____

(iii) _____

(iv) _____

Believing youths too often allow base excuses like shyness, shame, nervousness, fear, procrastination, failed attempts of the past, inadequate knowledge of the scripture, etc., to hinder them from winning souls. This need not be so. The Lord has promised to be with us and crown our efforts with success if we persist faithfully (Jeremiah 1:7-8). If you evaluate your scriptural knowledge to be shallow, that should not discourage you.

Q4: What methods of soul winning can you see from these references?

- John 4:28-30
- John 1:45-46
- Colossians 4:16
- Acts 8 : 5
- Acts 8 : 35

We all can share testimonies like the Samaritan woman. We can invite friends to church services and special programs. And we can give out Gospel tracts, cassettes and magazines. The summary then is that we all can and must get involved in the task of soul winning. The time is short, the harvest is ripe; and the night is fast approaching. Are you winning souls for Christ? You can start today.

STUDY 25

THE UNFORGETTABLE ENCOUNTER

Memory verse: “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (11 *Corinthians 5: 17*).

Text: Acts 9:1-6, 10-15

In life, we come across people and things. Sometimes we are opportune to meet with highly placed people like Ministers, Governors, Presidents, or visit sites and monumental edifices such as International Airports or Museums. We often have short memories of some of these. Some are, however, not easily forgotten. Paul, on his way to Damascus had an encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ and throughout his life, he never forgot it. He remembered vividly what happened to him and what the Lord told him. Because of the importance of the encounter, he did not fail to do what the Lord instructed him to do.

Q1a: Who did Paul have an encounter with in our text?

Q1b: Why did he not forget the encounter?

The encounter Paul had turned his life around. As a sinner he was zealous for the things of God, and thought that he was doing the right thing. However, after the encounter, he became converted and he knew that he had been on the wrong way of life (Acts 22:3-11).

Q2: From Acts 22:3-5, state why Paul never thought he was working against God’s will until he met with the Lord

Q2b: What do sinning youths do today to make them think they are born again?

Q3: What can a sinning youth do in order to be saved?

Prior to this encounter, Paul never recognized nor accepted the Lordship of Jesus Christ. But, from that time on, he lived for Christ to the end of his life (Philippians 1:21; II Timothy 4:7). Like Paul, the Apostle many unsaved youths think that their religious observance, giving of tithes, singing in the choir, doing good, etc., is the same thing as salvation. This is not true. The Bible is replete with people who had unforgettable encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ. The Disciples of Christ are classic examples (I John 1:1-5; II Peter 1:16-18)

Q4: Mention other people that gave their lives to the Lord in the Bible

(i) _____

(ii) _____

(iii) _____

(iv) _____

Have you had an encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ? When, where and how? Are you still in the experience? It is an experience that should remain alive in your memory for life. Never compromise it or trade it off with anything. Do what the Lord commands to be done. There is reward if you keep it to the end. (Matthew 24:13; II Timothy 4:8).

STUDY 26

LIVING DAILY IN THE SPIRIT'S POWER

Memory verse: “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him” (Acts 10:38).

Text: Acts 2:1-4; 4:31-33

The Holy Spirit is the third personality in the Godhead. He has power and was responsible for the supernatural manifestations in the lives of the prophets and men of the Old Testament period. Today, we, who are operating under a better covenant, can have the privilege of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us. In such a union, the youth that is filled with the Holy Spirit will live a daily life of power over all circumstances of life.

Q1: How does one come into the experience of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit?

In John chapter sixteen verse seven, the Lord Jesus Christ promised the Holy Spirit (whom He described as the comforter) for his disciples. This experience is only for genuinely saved and sanctified souls (John 14:17, Acts 15:8-9; John 17:17) who have a strong desire to be filled (John 7:37-39). The saved, sanctified and thirsty youth will still need to move a step further and pray in faith (Luke 11:10-13) before the Holy Spirit can indwell such a person.

Q2: What are the evidences that show that a Christian youth is living daily in the spirit's power?

- (i) _____ (ii) _____
(iii) _____ (iv) _____

The power of the Holy Spirit does not rest without external manifestations in a believing youth. Bold declaration of the Gospel (Acts 1:8) even if such a person was weak before is

a mark of the Spirit's power. Deep knowledge (John 14:26) of the scriptures and a life of fervent and mountain moving prayers are attributes of a Spirit filled Christian youth. It is also worthy of note that the fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:22-25) is constantly seen in such a life as joy flows like a river. There is also love that nobody can explain, peace of mind, longsuffering, unshakable faith etc.

Q3: How can a Spirit-filled youth retain the experience on a daily basis according to the following scripture references?

- (i) Romans 8:11-13 _____
- (ii) I Thessalonians 5:17 _____
- (iii) Galatians 5:4-5 _____
- (iv) Ephesians 4:30-32 _____

If we must live daily in the power of the Spirit, we must, like Paul the Apostle in I Corinthians 9:27, strive to live holy lives and not satisfy the flesh and its desires. The need for a constant life of prayer can also not be overemphasized. A youth desirous of living a constant Spirit - controlled life must depend on the grace of God to see him through as no man can prevail by strength. Finally, as the Holy Spirit does not force Himself on anyone, we must refrain from acts like stubborn- ness and disobedience to the gentle voice of the Holy Spirit. This can grieve Him and cause Him to withdraw His ever comforting presence from us.