

YOUTH SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

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PASTOR W.F. KUMUYI

**Founder & General Superintendent
Deeper Life Bible Church Worldwide**

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 690

BOAZ MARRIED RUTH

MEMORY VERSE: “So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son” (Ruth 4:13).

TEXT: Ruth 4:1-22

The journey that started with suffering, sadness and sorrow in the previous chapters now ends with joy and happiness. The sacrificial decision of Ruth is now being rewarded by the almighty God. Moreover, the sacrificial love of Boaz to accept Ruth is also confirmed and commended by the elders of Israel. Also, Naomi's tears are now wiped off with joy and gladness. There is no service rendered to God and man that will not be rewarded. **“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister”** (Hebrews 6:10).

The text before us is the climax of the story in the book of Ruth. Boaz took steps according to the custom in Israel. Through this, the redemptive right was transferred to him, including the right to marry Ruth. This was witnessed by the elders in Israel. The elders prayed for them to be fruitful and famous in the land of Israel. Hence, the Lord who blesses the marriage union blessed them with a male child through which the lineage of Jesus Christ can be traced.

As youths, your decision for Christ today will be rewarded here and in eternity. Your effort to study hard to pass your examinations without cheating will be crowned with good grades tomorrow. Therefore, do not be lazy in whatever good things you are doing now (Ecclesiastes 9:10). Examples of youths that were rewarded for their decisions for the Lord include Joseph, Esther, Samuel, David, Daniel and his friends, Timothy, Philip's daughters, etc. It is your turn to decide for the Lord so that He could bless you too.

REDEMPTION RIGHT TRANSFERRED TO BOAZ (Ruth 4:1-8; 3:11,12; Deuteronomy 25:5-10; Genesis 38:8,9; 1 Corinthians 7:39)

“Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down” (verse 1). Boaz was a wise man. He did all things properly and in order. He knew the word of God and was ready to obey it. He also knew the custom and culture of the children of Israel well. He tactically called his senior kinsman to redeem his right, which he accepted. But when additional condition was made to include marrying Ruth, the kinsman rejected the offer. **“Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it”** (verses 5,6).

Question 1: *Why is wisdom necessary in life and how can we get it?*

“Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore, get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding” (Proverbs 4:7). Wisdom is necessary in life and in all we do. It gives direction, strength and makes us to use resources properly. The Lord gives wisdom freely to His children who ask from Him. **“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). He gave wisdom to Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and they passed their examinations with flying colors (Daniel 1:17). Another lesson Christian youths must learn from the attitude of Boaz was his preference for his kinsman to make a choice first (Romans 12:10).

“Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbor: and this was a testimony in

Israel. Therefore, the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So, he drew off his shoe” (verses 7,8). In Israel, when a person declines to accept his redemptive right, he will remove his shoe and give to the person who was ready to accept it. This was what happened in our text.

Question 2: Does the word of God still permit this practice in the New Testament?

“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” (1 Corinthians 7:39). The practice of marrying one’s late brother’s wife is not allowed in the New Testament. After the death of a person’s wife or husband, he or she is then free to marry anyone he or she wants but **“only in the Lord”**.

RELIABLE WITNESSES TO REDEMPTION RIGHT (Ruth 4:9-12; 1 Chronicles 2:4; Psalm 128:1-6)

“And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech’s, and all that was Chilion’s and Mahlon’s, of the hand of Naomi” (verse 9). After the nearest kinsman to Ruth transferred the redemptive right to Boaz, he called on the elders to be witnesses. The elders and the people that were present gave their consent and declared thus: **“We are witnesses”** (verse 11).

Question 3: What was the pronouncement from the elders to Boaz and Ruth?

“And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, we are witnesses. The LORD makes the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem” (verse 11). First, the elders pronounced fruitfulness on the couple and prayed for them to be like Rachel and Leah-Jacob’s wives. Second, that they will be rich in Ephratah, hence, no poverty in their lives. Third, that they will be famous in Bethlehem. Fourth, that they will be like the house of Pharez whom Tamar bare Judah. Marriage, indeed, is a blessing from the Lord to those who leave the choice with

Him. **“Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor of the LORD”** (Proverbs 18:22).

REWARD OF COMMITMENT TO THE LORD (Ruth 4:13-22; Matthew 1:3-6; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Hebrews 6:10-12)

“So, Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son” (verse 13). Ruth’s decision to follow Naomi was a great and challenging one. However, Naomi, her mother-in-law and mentor, gave her practical and scriptural directives until the Lord perfected His plan and purpose for her. On the other hand, Boaz who accepted to marry her paid a great price not minding the fear to mar his inheritance. Our commitment to the Lord cannot go unrewarded. Therefore, we should not mind negative comments of the people against our decision to follow Christ.

Question 4: *What was the reward God gave Boaz and his wife?*

The Lord blessed this couple with a son, and his name was called “Obed”. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David through whom Jesus Christ came. The blessing also reached out to Naomi. **“And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him”** (verses 14,15). From our text, the grandson was to be a restorer of her life and nourish her in her old age. Naomi must have been very happy and joyful to see Ruth in this wonderful state. What a wonderful way to end a life journey! Decide for Jesus today, your life will be blessed now and in eternity. The question for everyone is: Will you go with this Jesus? (Genesis 24:59). What is your answer?

LESSON 691

HANNAH'S PRAYER AND VOW

MEMORY VERSE: “And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore” (1 Samuel 1:10).

TEXT: 1 Samuel 1:1-18

The book of first Samuel is the beginning of the ministry of prophets and the reign of kings in Israel. The book has great instructions and lessons for youths today. Also, the book has great characters of youths and their exploits. In it, we see characters like Samuel, who was dedicated by his parents to be a prophet in Israel; David, who defeated Goliath, the champion of God's enemy; Jonathan's love for David and his exploits, etc. However, there were also bad examples of characters to be avoided. These include Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli who were sons of Belial because **“they knew not the Lord”**. We also see Saul, the first king who backslid, sought after familiar spirits and died for his transgressions (1 Chronicles 10:13). Our text focuses on Hannah's prayer and vow. Through her consecration, commitment and courage, she overcame all her tribulations, trials and troubles. Today, God still answers the prayers of His people. There is nothing too hard for Him to do. Learn to bring your problems to Him in prayer.

Question 1: *What is prayer?*

“And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened” (Luke 11:9,10). Prayer is communing with God, lifting our hearts to Him for help, crying to Him for assistance, pouring out our hearts for His intervention, asking, seeking and knocking His throne for mercy and making request with thanksgiving to Him.

HANNAH'S PROBLEM AND DISCOMFORT (1 Samuel 1:1-8; Luke 13:11-17; Hebrews 10:25; Philippians 1:28; Psalm 27:1-3,13,14; 31:9-17)

The first book of Samuel introduces us to the family of Elkannah, an Ephrathite, who married two wives - Hannah and Peninnah. But Hannah was the first and rightful wife. The Scripture says: **“And he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children”** (verse 2). That was her problem which caused discomfort and distress.

Question 2: *Mention some problems facing youths today.*

“Man, that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble” (Job 14:1). As adults are faced with different kinds of problems, youths are not left out. Some of the problems confronting youths today include how to be free from sins, passing examinations, frequent sicknesses, family challenges, peer pressures, etc. Some of these problems are spiritual, caused by the devil and his agents. Although Hannah was a woman of sorrow and discomfort, she was spiritually awake and worshipped the God of heaven who could provide solutions to all problems. At this time, when almost all the families in Israel were given to the worship of Baalim and Ashtaroth, Elkanah's family was still worshipping the true God. Hannah was part of those who worshipped the God of heaven. She gave herself to a sincere spiritual service to the great God. She did not allow her problem to hinder her from travelling from Ramah to Shiloh to worship God. No wonder the Lord did not allow her to continue in sorrow and shame. What a lesson for us today!

“And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb” (verse 6). Hannah was barren **“because the LORD had shut up her womb”** means God permitted it. This does not mean the Lord was the cause of the barrenness. Remember, the Lord does not tempt or cause evil. **“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man”** (James 1:13). The Lord allows it for His plan, purpose, promises and power to bring glory to His name. However, her bareness, as seen by Peninnah, was a subject

of ridicule. She caused her to be sad. This certainly caused discomfort, distress and disturbance to Hannah. It made her to weep and she did not eat despite Elkanah's love and his giving her a worthy portion. **"Then said Elkannah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?"** (verse 8).

One important lesson we should learn from Hannah while her adversary provoked her is that she did not fret or fear. The Scripture says: **"And in nothing terrified by your adversaries ..."** (Philippians 1:28a). Fear destroys faith in God and His promises in our hearts. It hinders the spirit of supplication and removes the confidence and courage to conquer our challenges. Be like David who said: **"The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"** (Psalm 27:1).

HANNAH'S PRAYER AND DEVOTION (1 Samuel 1:9-11; Psalm 55:22; 1 Peter 5:7; 1 John 3:20,21; 5:14,15; Matthew 21:22; Luke 1:13,24,25,45,37; 1 Samuel 1:24-28)

After the family of Elkannah had eaten in Shiloh, Hannah went to God in prayer. She was compelled by sorrow, sadness and suffering from her adversary to pray to the Lord. The weak and weary should always turn to God Almighty for divine help. In the case of Hannah, the comfort of a loving husband and special portion were not enough to bring relief to her. Divine comfort can only come by heart-felt prayer to God. The prayer of faith is the pathway to carrying our burden to the Lord. Therefore, let sorrowful heart climb on the wings of prayer and faith to present its petition before the great God.

Question 3: *Enumerate the ingredients of effective praying as observed in Hannah's prayer.*

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16). In Hannah's prayer, there are great ingredients of effective praying. **One**, the heart must be free from all forms of sins, and have a good character. From her attitude, Hannah had

peace with God. This enabled her to come boldly before the throne of grace. She did not allow her problem to make her unapproachable. There was a total absence of hatred, vengeance or rudeness. She was meek, lowly, quiet and patient in the face of provocation. These qualities of character and heart disposition aids one to be effective in prayer. **“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me: But verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me”** (Psalm 66:18-20).

Two, praying according to the will of God is essential. Hannah had a legitimate desire and need. Her approach was also scriptural (1 John 5:14,15). **Three**, fervency of the spirit in prayer is also necessary. Hannah’s prayer had an expression of fervent desire in her soul. This led her to gush out prayer with her whole heart before the Lord. **Four**, there should be perseverance and importunity till the answer comes (Luke 11:8; 18:1; Ephesians 6:18). Hannah persevered in her prayer before the Lord until the answer came. She would not take a “NO” for an answer. When we pray with burdens in our hearts, we should persevere and be importunate in our request. **Five**, complete surrender to the Lord. The place of prayer is a place of devotion and yieldedness to the Lord. Hannah did not come to God with the sense of self-righteousness. There was no murmuring and complaining of unfair dealings from others. She did not despise the worship of God because of delay in child bearing.

“And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head” (verse 11). Hannah prayed to the Lord and she made a vow before Him. A vow is a commitment to the Lord in response to great things He has done or will do for you. In her vow, she said if the Lord will take away her affliction, remember her and give her a male child, she will give the child to the Lord all the days

of his life. This was a great commitment to the Lord. The question is: **“What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?”** (Psalm 116:12).

HANNAH’S PEACEFUL DISPOSITION (1 Samuel 1:12-18; Matthew 15:21-28; Hebrews 4:14-16; 7:25,26)

“And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth” (verse 12). Hannah’s prayer was a heart-felt one. She spoke from the heart but only her lips moved. There was sincerity and earnestness in her prayer. Yet, God in heaven saw her tears and heard her cry. Her prayer came up as a remembrance before the Lord. However, when Eli the high priest, acted indifferently to Hannah’s prayer and requested her to put away her wine, her response was that of a peaceful disposition. **“And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto”** (verses 15,16). Sometimes tests come to us when there are needs in our lives. Our response at such times determines an indication of what is in our hearts.

For example, during Jesus’ earthly ministry, a woman of Canaan came to Him for help. He answered her not a word. The disciples requested Him to send her away because she was crying after them. Despite all these, the woman held on to Jesus for mercy and help. At last, Jesus commended her faith and she received healing for her daughter (Matthew 15:21-28).

“Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him. And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad” (verses 17,18). Eli, being the high priest, acted as a spokesperson for God. He proclaimed that God would grant Hannah her heart’s desire. She received Eli’s word with reverence and faith, and went home rejoicing doubting nothing. What a great

challenge for Christian youths today. Even though our leaders correct us, that should not hinder us from gaining from their ministrations.

Question 4: *Who is our High Priest today?*

“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession” (Hebrews 4:14). Jesus Christ, the Son of God is our great High Priest today. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities and burdens. Our High Priest never discourages anyone from praying but assures us that **“What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them”** (Mark 11:24). When we look up to Him, our burdens will be gone sooner than we imagine; our tears will be wiped away and our desires will be granted by our heavenly Father. This same Jesus has ability to solve all our problems. Let us trust Him and we will not be ashamed. **“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever”** (Hebrews 13:8).

LESSON 692

THE BIRTH OF SAMUEL

MEMORY VERSE: “Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, **Because I have asked him of the LORD**” (1 Samuel 1:20).

TEXT: 1 Samuel 1:19-28

God’s ability to do all things is made manifest when a believer in need faithfully seeks for divine help. This always lead to miraculous intervention in life’s challenges. There are lots of cases of God’s wondrous intervention in the Bible. One of such cases is the one we are studying today. Hannah had a case of barrenness which the love of her husband could not take away. Her rival, seeing that she was barren, capitalized on it to mock her. She decided to approach God for divine solution. Her barrenness and the mockery of her rival soon came to an end when she called on the God of Israel. Assurance from Eli, the priest, was a boost to her faith. **“Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him”** (verse 17). She went back home with a change of countenance in full assurance of answered prayer.

Question 1: *What should believing youths do whenever they are faced with life’s challenges?*

“Man, that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble” (Job 14:1). Life is full of challenges. The troubles of life can manifest in various forms: failure, disappointment, ill-health, loss of loved ones, persecution, delay in marriage, delay in child bearing, etc. Christian youths should not be confused whenever they are experiencing adversity. Being a child of God does not exclude them from problems of life. Any youth who treads the path of prayer like Hannah will soon conquer whatever challenges of life he is faced with. When Hannah prayed, God remembered her; and as you pray today, God will remember you. **“And they rose**

up in the morning early, and worshipped before the Lord, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkannah knew Hannah his wife; and the Lord remembered her” (1 Samuel 1:19).

THE CONCEPTION OF SAMUEL FROM THE LORD
(1 Samuel 1:19,20; Genesis 18:10-14; 25:21; Exodus 23:26; Luke 1:36,37)

“And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the Lord, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkannah knew Hannah his wife; and the Lord remembered her. Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord” (1 Samuel 1:19,20). Hannah had gone to Shiloh several times for the yearly sacrifice with her husband. Now, she took it upon herself to pray passionately to God for solution to her barrenness. In like manner, youths with problems in their lives should use the monthly, quarterly, and yearly programs in the church as an opportunity to get solution. **“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not”** (Jeremiah 33: 3).

Question 2: *What was the basis for Hannah’s answered prayer?*

The basis for Hannah’s answered prayer was the faithfulness of God. **“There shall nothing cast their young, nor be barren, in thy land: the number of thy days I will fulfil”** (Exodus 23:26). In God’s plan for man, barrenness has no place. His command from the beginning is, **“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). Therefore, there is no basis for any of us to be barren in anyway. He will ever remain faithful to His promises. But it is only those that know their God that shall be strong amidst problems and do exploits.

Apart from Hannah, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Elizabeth the mother of John the Baptist received miraculous babies through prayers of faith. One thing peculiar with these women is that, they gave birth to special children whom God used in their generations. No youth should therefore, accept barrenness in their life either spiritually or physically. **“For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore, ye sons of Jacob are not consumed”** (Malachi 3:6).

THE COMMITMENT OF SAMUEL’S PARENTS TO THE LORD (1 Samuel 1:21-23; Deuteronomy 23:21; Luke 2:41,42)

“And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto the LORD the yearly sacrifice, and his vow” (1 Samuel 1:21). God instructed Moses to establish the ordinance of sacrifice of offering or vow to the Lord for the children of Israel. Voluntary offerings were to be brought in appreciation of the goodness of God. This was to be part of their worship to the living God in the Old Testament (Leviticus 1: 1-3). Elkanah’s commitment to this sacrifice of offering and vow came into prominence as we come to the opening chapter of the historical book of Samuel. As a Christian youth, have you ever brought anything to the Lord in appreciation of His goodness?

Question 3: How can born again boys and girls show their appreciation to God for His goodness?

God takes notice of every act of His children. He delights in those with grateful hearts that sincerely worship Him. The consistency of Elkanah’s yearly sacrifice of offering gave rise to the opportunity for his wife Hannah to encounter the God of wonders. Therefore, Christian youths should appreciate God for His manifold blessings. The blessing of salvation from impending doom and disgraceful sinful practices is enough reason for showing appreciation to God. Other reasons for appreciating God include: His provision, protection, preservation, promotion, healing, and deliverance. We should all be committed to showing gratitude to God. Consistent attendance of weekly meetings, Success Camp, retreats, school fellowship and other appointed meetings in the church are part of the sacrifices to be offered to God (Exodus 23:15).

Whenever you are led of God to vow, ensure you redeem the vow. Furthermore, God expects us to appreciate Him with our services. This include, preaching the gospel, singing in the choir, leading other youths as officers in the school and Home Success fellowship. As a mark of our gratitude to God, we should be committed to these. **So, the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she weaned him**" (verse 23). Elkannah was a godly man with cordial relationship with his family. He was a man who had respect for his wife's opinion. He was a good listener and considerate. Hannah vowed to lend Samuel to the Lord and Elkannah cooperated with her. Christian youths should endeavor to emulate this and cooperate in worshipping and serving the Lord in full cooperation with their parents.

THE CONSECRATION OF SAMUEL TO THE LORD
(1Samuel 1:24-28; Exodus 13:12,13; Genesis 22:2; Romans 12:1,2; 1 Chronicles 29:5)

"And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the LORD in Shiloh: and the child was young" (verse 24). Hannah redeemed her vow to the Lord. She was faithful to her promise to the Lord. What a challenge! How many of the vows you made to God have you redeemed? Hannah fully gave Samuel to the Lord with **"three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine"**. His consecration was for life. **"Therefore, also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there"** (verse 28).

Moreover, God commanded that every male child that opens the womb should be consecrated to Him. The consecration of Samuel was done not only in obedience to this command, but as a voluntary submission by his mother to God. This was done in appreciation to God who granted her request. Samuel was lent to God all his life. This means that he was to remain in the house of God and His service for his lifetime. Hannah did not wait for Samuel to become a teenager before fulfilling her promise to God. Now, the sons of Eli were known as children of Belial –

wayward, irresponsible children. Hannah did not know how Samuel would be treated and influenced by these children. She did not even know how he would be fed and clothed. Despite these unknown, she gave him to God as a living sacrifice.

Question 4: *What do you understand by consecration?*

“I am thine, save me; for I have sought thy precepts” (Psalm 119:94). Consecration means devotion and dedication to the Lord. Every born-again boy or girl is obliged to consecrate his or her life to God. There are some youths today, born of believing parents, who vowed to the Lord before their conception to consecrate them to the Lord. It is unfortunate that some of these youths are not cooperating with their parents. This is a source of grief to such godly parents in churches today. If you are one of them, submit yourself to the vow your parents made and surrender your life as a living sacrifice to God. Let God have His way in your life today. Apart from the vow made by our parents, God expressly demands our consecration to Him.

Question 5: *In what areas are Christian youths expected to be consecrated to the Lord?*

“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). God commands saved youths to consecrate their all to Him. Their bodies must be holy to God. Whatever does not glorify God should not be used by heaven-minded youths. They should not submit themselves to immoral act or defilement. God commands, **“glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s”** (1 Corinthians 5:20). We are also to consecrate our services to God. This implies that saved boys and girls must render services to God. They must get involved in evangelization of sinful youths in their neighborhood and the schools. In addition, we are to edify the body of Christ.

This is done through the Youth Home Success Fellowship, and the School Fellowship programs. Are you ready to consecrate your life today? **“The gold for things of gold, and the silver for things of silver, and for all manner of work *to be* made by the hands of artificers. And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the LORD?”** (1 Chronicles 29:5).

LESSON 693

HANNAH'S SONG OF PRAISE

MEMORY VERSE: “And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation” (1Samuel 2:1).

TEXT: 1 Samuel 2:1-11

In the previous chapter, Hannah sought the face of the Lord in her adversity and discomfort. God answered her prayer of faith. She was given a male child named “Samuel” which by interpretation is “I asked for him from God”. This is what led to her song of praise in our text today. It is noteworthy that every Christian youth should learn how to show gratitude to God or whosoever responds to their needs.

Question 1: *What is praise?*

“Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name” (1 Chronicles 29:13). Praise is an expression of gratitude in words or songs as an act of worship. Hannah praised God through her prayers by clearly expressing what God can do through the saint’s prayers and the power that is released when the believer prays. A good understanding of the conversation between Hannah and God in this text will give us a deeper understanding of the concept of prayer. We are told in chapter one that **“... it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth. Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard...”** (1 Samuel 1:12,13). But now **“Hannah prayed, and said...”**. The expressions of Hannah’s prayer define what prayer is to a believer. Prayer is not just about asking or speaking to God, though these are essential parts of it.

Question 2: *What is prayer?*

As revealed in the Scriptures, there should be **“...all prayer and supplication in the Spirit...”** (Ephesians 6:18). Prayer

is communing with God. This may be an expression of gratitude for what God has done or in anticipation of what we believe God to do. Prayer may be uttered or unuttered. It may be a deep desire uttered to God. Prayer may be a strong crying to God. Prayer is the groaning of the heart, to the Lord. It is the soul's sincere desire and request from God. Prayer can be a form of supplication.

PRAISES THROUGH PRAYER (1 Samuel 2:1,2; Psalm 147:1; 2Chronicles 20:1-4,21; 29:27-30; Matthew 6:9; John 11:41-43; Acts 16:25,26; Philippians 4:6)

“And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation” (verse 1). From this text, we can see what should be our attitude during prayer. We should begin every prayer with an attitude of gratitude for what the Lord has done in the past. Hannah attributed the reason for her joy to God in answering her request. She also praised God for victory over her enemies. She rejoiced in the deliverance God gave her from the reproaches of her enemies.

Question 3: *When and how can we praise God?*

Praising God should be part of our prayer just as the practice of saints in Bible days. They did not only praise God when they had victory but even when they anticipated it. The Psalmist tells us that praise is good and pleasant. When our desires are fulfilled or lingering; when things are fine or otherwise; we should praise God. He commanded over and over again that people should praise God besides loading Him with requests of their daily needs. Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah made praises part of their prayers. We can praise God by singing or talking of His greatness and wonderful deeds. **“There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God”** (verse 2). Our Lord Jesus Christ enjoins us to start every prayer with praise which He also demonstrated by example. **“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name”** (Matthew 6:9). The Apostle Paul demonstrated the tremendous victory a Christian youth

who combines prayer and praises could have. He urged that our requests should not be lack praises to God **“Be careful about nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God”** (Philippians 4:6).

POSSIBILITIES THROUGH PRAYER (1 Samuel 2:3-8; 1 Chronicle 4:9,10; 2 Chronicles 20:1-4,21,22; Acts 12:1-11; 16:25,26; Jeremiah 33:3)

“Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogance come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed” (verse 3). From the expression of Hannah in this verse, it shows that God in His sovereignty can silence our enemies through prayer of faith.

Question 4: *What can the prayer of a Christian youth do?*

What prayer can do is expressed in the words of Hannah. **“The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength”** (verse 4). When Christian youths pray, all weapons fashioned against them are destroyed and their enemies are rendered powerless. Besides, they receive strength from the Spirit of God to withstand all the onslaughts of the enemies. **“They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children are waxed feeble”** (verse 5). The needs of a Christian youth who prays are met. Such needs could be food or other necessities of life. God makes their enemies to become feeble, turn to be their servants and begging for their favor. **“The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up”** (verse 6).

A Christian youth who prays will be preserved by God from untimely death. If he or she is down with sickness, God will raise him out of the bed of affliction. **“The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up”** (verse 7). God has the power to make rich or poor, to lift up or bring down and He would do whatever is in the interest of a Christian youth who spends time to

pray. **“He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD’S, and he hath set the world upon them”** (verse 8). Among other things, God can promote a Christian youth that prays.

Question 5: Mention those who prayed in the Bible and state the results of their prayers.

There are other testimonies of what prayer did in the lives of people in Bible days. A case is that of Jabez. He was so named because his mother gave birth to him in sorrow. He prayed that God would bless, enlarge and keep him and God granted his request. He prayed to change the unpleasant circumstances that surrounded his life till he became more honorable than his brethren. **“And Jabez was more honorable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested”** (1 Chronicles 4:9,10).

As for Jehoshaphat, he was surrounded by enemies in battle. As he prayed and organized praise worship to God, his enemies were defeated. **“And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth forever. And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten”** (2 Chronicles 20:21,22). Also, the church prayed for Peter while Herod kept him in the prison and great was the miraculous deliverance! Paul and Silas were imprisoned for the course of the gospel. At midnight, they prayed and sang praises. Not only did their chains fall off, the doors of the prison opened wide for them to escape. **“And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto**

God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed" (Acts 16:25,26).

Question 6: *What should we do when faced with problems in life?*

God has challenged us to call upon Him. **"Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not"** (Jeremiah 33:3). We should pray to God in the name of Jesus, by faith, doubting nothing. **"Therefore, I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them"** (Mark 11:24). If we pray with doubt or add some other things to the prayer which are not in line with God's word, we will not receive answers.

POWER THROUGH PRAYER (1 Samuel 2:9-11; Jude 24; 1 Peter 1:5; Isaiah 54:17).

The power of a saintly youth who prays is unlimited. **"He will keep the feet of his saints"**. A saint who prays regularly enjoys divine power to be kept. He is kept unto salvation that shall be revealed. He is kept from falling into sin. Underneath him is the everlasting arm **"and the wicked shall be silent in darkness"**. He has the power to put to silence or to condemn all the enemies that revolt against him. This is possible by God's power through prayer. **"The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth"**. A prayerful saint, though a youth, can harness God's power to defeat his enemies in battle. Through prayer, he can bring his enemies to judgment. In the end, **"he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed"**. God's prayerful saints will be strong to do exploits. He will be joyful and glad in life.

Question 7: *How can saints receive God's power in prayer?*

One avenue to tap into God's power is our regular quiet time. Also, the church has provided various avenues to pray, such as the retreats, monthly revival programs and various prayer meetings organized at the districts and group levels. Every youth can avail himself of these opportunities to pray and develop spiritually. When the ceremony at Shiloh ended, seeing that the child was a product of prayer and vow to God, Samuel was left in Shiloh to minister to the Lord. Today, it is our privilege to worship, walk with and work for the Lord. There are rewards for every faithful service rendered to Him. **“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord”** (1 Corinthians 15:58).

LESSON 694

THE SINS OF ELI'S SONS

MEMORY VERSE: “Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord: for men abhorred the offering of the Lord” (1 Samuel 2:17).

TEXT: 1 Samuel 2:12-26

Eli the high priest, was given the responsibility of ensuring that Israel remained committed to the Lord. He was also the one who confirmed the prayer of Hannah before she conceived Samuel. He was both a judge and high priest over Israel. He served the Lord forty years. After the birth of Samuel, he was brought to the priest in fulfilment of his mother’s vow. Samuel, thereafter remained with the priest but the children of Eli were ungodly.

Question 1: *Who were the sons of Eli and what are their characters?*

“Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord” (verse 12). The sons of Eli were Hophni and Phinehas, who were referred to as the sons of Belial. They dishonored the service of the Lord, committing immorality in the house of God and disobeyed the word of God.

REGRETTABLE LIFESTYLE OF SINNING YOUTHS (1 Samuel 2:12–17; Judges 20:13; 1 Samuel 10:27; 1 Kings 21:13; Ecclesiastes 7:1)

The sons of Eli failed to follow the footsteps of their father. The Bible describes them thus: **“Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD”** (1 Samuel 2:12). It is pertinent to note that even though they were involved in evil and wicked acts, they were still described by the name of their father. This was an aberration and a disgrace to their father. Proverbs state the importance of a good name. **“A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold”** (Proverbs 22:1). The unfortunate and regrettable lifestyle of these young boys brought disgrace and disrepute to

their father's name. They were called the sons of Belial, who knew not the Lord.

Question 2: *What do you understand by Eli's sons being called the sons of Belial?*

Belial means *worthless, lawless or reckless*. Sons of Belial are people others would run away and shield their children from, so that they do not copy their evil ways. Eli's two sons were described in such a way because they even went as far as disregarding God. When people came to make sacrifices, they dishonored God by not letting the sacrifice follow the normal process as specified in the laws. They wanted to take what they needed for themselves first before following the prescribed process. It made the people unhappy and afraid to bring sacrifices when they were on duty. **"Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD"** (verse 17). God was highly displeased with their evil actions. All Christian youths should therefore be mindful of their actions in the house of God, lest their lifestyle distort the normal pattern of worship in the church or camp programs.

Question 3: *What lesson can we learn from Eli and his sons?*

God has explicitly stated that the **"The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him"** (Ezekiel 18:20). Every youth needs to know that the sins of a child cannot be passed on to his father. Everyone will bear the consequences of his or her actions. Even though Eli was the high priest, his life was different from his sons', who failed to follow his footsteps. Eli also seemed to have been too soft on his children failing to enforce discipline on them. Silence when evil is being perpetrated can result into greater evil and wickedness. It can also lead to downfall and death if not curbed.

Children of leaders and ministers of the gospel are also warned to ensure that they follow the Lord. As children of

leaders, they are expected to be shining light, radiating the glory of God wherever they go, that the world may appreciate and glorify God through their lives. All youths should endeavor to abide by the word of God and live lives that please the Lord.

REWARD FOR LIVING AS A SAINTLY YOUTH (1 Samuel 2:18-21,26; Proverbs 1:10-19; Psalm 1:1-6; Romans 7:15-20; Daniel 1:6-9; Luke 1:80; 2:40; 2 Timothy 1:5)

Contrary to the lifestyle of the children of Eli, Samuel lived in a godly way and brought blessings to his parents. He was dedicated to the Lord and lived in the temple. He did not allow the lifestyle of Eli's sons to influence him. **"But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod"** (verse 18). Samuel was dedicated and committed to the way and will of the Lord. He did not allow sinners to entice him. He refrained from their covetous and blasphemous ways and ensured that he followed the instructions of Eli. Samuel's way of life created so much affection to his parents and all who met him. His life brought smiles and commendation to his parents who showered him with gifts. Youths who are godly in character will always reap the rewards. You will be blessed by God and promoted. Friends, family, neighbors, classmates, peers, elders and teachers will all show interest in ensuring that such youths are appreciated.

Question 4: *What are the characteristics of a saintly youth?*

Being saintly is not by human efforts alone. A youth can only be saintly if he gets washed in the blood of Jesus. Without Jesus, a youth will fight and struggle against sin unsuccessfully. Paul in the book of Romans explained that a youth who has not experienced Jesus will find it difficult to live right (Romans 7:14-19). When a youth wants to defeat the power of sin, he comes to Jesus Christ to acknowledge his sins, asks for forgiveness, repents from the sins and accepts the Lord as his personal Lord and Savior. After then, he will be able to live a life above sin. Saintly youths are expected to be righteous, obedient, respectful to elders, committed to the Lord, be willing

to share the gospel with others and do works that are reflective of their new life in Christ. In addition, the life of youths who are genuinely saved will always be a shining influence for other youths to emulate.

“And Eli blessed Elkannah and his wife, and said, The LORD gives thee seed of this woman for the loan which is lent to the LORD. And they went unto their own home” (1 Samuel 2:20). Eli prayed that the giving of Hannah’s only son to the Lord will result into more children for them. If Samuel had been a bad child, the priest would most likely not have prayed this prayer for his parents. However, his life created an avenue for his parents to be further blessed. The prayer was answered. **“And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the LORD”** (1 Samuel 2:21). From one child, Hannah became the mother of six children. What a multiplication of blessings by the Lord. When we do well, we will bring blessings to our parents and loved ones. We also become blessed and favored. **“And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favor both with the LORD, and with men”** (1 Samuel 2:26). As a youth, is your life a channel of blessing?

REPERCUSSIONS OF A SINFUL LIFE (1 Samuel 2:22–25; Proverbs 11:21; 16:5; Isaiah 1:16–20)

Unrepented sin only results into more acts of evil. The sons of Eli who were not properly cautioned and failed to listen to the little warnings from their father, had now graduated into worse acts of evil and wickedness. They started committing immorality with the women who came to the house of the Lord. **“Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation”** (1 Samuel 2:22). This was painful and caused deep heartaches to Eli who should have been resting in his old age.

Question 5: *What are the dangers of living in sin?*

“He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth *his* neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy”

(Proverbs 29:1). God expects everyone to live a life that pleases Him or bear the consequences if they fail to repent. For those who have known the Lord and backslid, if they fail to repent, the Lord will judge and destroy. **“For, lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name, and should ye be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished: for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the LORD of hosts”** (Jeremiah 25:29). Repent today to avoid any evil that has been set as a punishment for wickedness so that Christ’s blood can make you whole and free. **“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed”** (John 8:36).

LESSON 695

PAUL REHEARSES HIS CALLING

MEMORY VERSE: “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace” (Galatians 1:15).

TEXT: Galatians 1:11-24

Apostle Paul took time in the latter part of chapter one of his epistle to the Galatians to reflect on his past. He did this because of the unstable state of the Galatian believers. False teachers led some of them into backsliding as they were drawn into error contrary to what Paul preached to them earlier. Many of these false brethren had mingled with the members of the church. Christian youths should be aware that there are also false teachers around us today. They should not be deceived and led into error by these false teachers. Paul used the latter part of this epistle to reflect on his privileges as an apostle.

Question 1: *Why did Paul take time to reflect on his past now?*

Apostle Paul needed to remind them of his past active life in the Jewish religion. His zeal in the Jewish law, his hatred and persecution of the church of Christ, his conversion and call into the ministry by Christ. This background was required to convince the Galatians of the source of the gospel he preached to them. **“But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ”** (verses 11,12). Whenever we engage in preaching, it is sometimes good to reflect on our past life. Many sinning youths need the testimony of salvation to assure them that salvation in Christ is possible and real. It also makes them to believe the gospel and take a positive decision to surrender and follow Christ.

PAUL'S MESSAGE REVEALED BY CHRIST (Galatians 1:11,12,17-24; Acts 9:15,16; 2 Timothy 3:16,17; 2 Peter 3:15)

Apostle Paul indeed had detractors who did not only seek to frustrate his ministry but also to lead his congregation into error. They were resolved to turn these precious believers away from Christ through the error they preached. As a shepherd, Paul was not only observant to discover what the false brethren were doing, but corrected it immediately. Youth leaders and officers should emulate this attitude exhibited by the apostle. As an Apostle, he confirmed that no one taught him the gospel that he preached. **“But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ”** (Galatians 1:11,12). He, first, had an encounter with Jesus, he repented and surrendered his life to Him. Thereafter, he was called, chosen and commissioned to be a preacher. **“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: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake”** (Acts 9:15, 16).

Question 2: How did Apostle Paul get the gospel he preached?

Apostle Paul declared that the gospel he preached was through the **“revelation of Jesus Christ”**. This simply means that his preaching was purely through the inspiration of God. This accounted for the power in his preaching. Paul's sermons brought many to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. It also brought healing, deliverance and consolation for the afflicted and the oppressed.

Question 3: What other evidence(s) can you give to support the fact that Paul's gospel was from the Lord?

It was evident that Paul's gospel was from Christ as the hearers of his message experienced a change of life. They were turned from being sinners to being saints, from bondage to freedom and from darkness to light. Besides, it also received positive comment from other apostles.

Peter said, “...**And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you**” (2 Peter 2:15). Whenever a youth who is truly born again and filled with God’s Spirit preaches, there will be transformation of lives.

PAUL REHEARSES HIS PERSECUTION AGAINST THE CHURCH (Galatians 1:13,14,23,24; Acts 9:1,2; 1 Timothy 1:13; Matthew 12:30; John 16:2)

Paul’s past life in the Jewish religion was hazardous to the Church of Christ. He had profound hatred for the Church and persecuted the Christians. “**And Saul, yet breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem**” (Acts 9:1,2).

Question 4: *Why did Paul persecute the church of Christ?*

Paul’s effort was to stop the spread of the new faith of believers in Christ. Hence, he led the assault against the saints of God. He thought he was defending God by destroying those who called on the name of Jesus Christ. He later confessed, “**Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief**” (1 Timothy 1:13).

Question 5: *Was it the will of God that Paul persecuted the church?*

Paul was not doing God’s will by persecuting the Church. He was an instrument in the hand of the devil at that time. He did not know this! “**He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad**” (Matthew 12: 30). This also fulfilled Christ’s prophecy that, “**They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service**” (John 16:2). The same was the case of these false brethren, they were scattering what Paul built for the sake of their religion. Youths are advised

not to fight against God or do anything that will scatter the church of Christ. Watch your attitude and action so as not to work for the devil ignorantly.

Also, whenever we face persecution, we are admonished to bear it patiently and pray for our persecutors. Paul did not remain a persecutor. A time came that the grace of God was extended to him and he embraced it. He gave his life to Christ and got converted to the extent of becoming a preacher of the word. You should not remain the same. Sinning boys and girls should repent and allow God to use them to accomplish His will in this generation.

PAUL REHEARSES HIS CONVERSION, CALL AND COMMISSION BY CHRIST (Galatians 1:15, 16; Acts 9:4-6; 15,16; 26:13-20)

“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood” (verses 15,16). It is quite interesting that Paul gave his life to Christ when the grace of God reached him. He could relate this experience to us clearly. He did not resist the call to conversion. He willingly and immediately embraced it. He confessed and forsook his sins. He prayed through and continued in Christ and in fellowship till he was established in the faith.

Question 6: *Can you give vivid testimony of your salvation today?*

It is sometimes surprising that some youths cannot evidently testify of their salvation like Paul. Paul could say when he was converted. He could tell of the incident that led to his conversion. He could tell the day, the time and the one that saved him. Paul did not seek any human approval when he was called to repentance. He did not think of what might be the reaction(s) of the high priest and those of his acquaintances. Today, some youths are just following the bandwagon of sinners. At times, when they are convicted by the Holy Spirit, they begin to allow the appeal from their human reasoning to stand in their way.

The conversion of Apostle Paul was followed by a call and commission to preach the gospel. What he was to do in the Kingdom was clearly spelt out. If he had delayed, many of the souls that came into the Kingdom through him would have been lost. Thank God, he did not confer with flesh and blood. He did not seek approval of men. He moved into the business of soul winning immediately. You too have a ministry which no one else can fulfill. Christian youths should rise to the call of God for their lives. Christ is still saying, **“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature”** (Mark 16:15).

LESSON 696

THE UNIVERSAL GOSPEL

MEMORY VERSE: “And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain” (Galatians 2:2).

TEXT: Galatians 2:1-10.

Apostle Paul, from every indication, was indeed an apostle of Christ to the Gentiles. He labored diligently to fulfill his ministry. **“If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord”** (1 Corinthians 9:2). Having been called, chosen and commissioned by the Lord (Acts 9:15), he did everything to accomplish the will of his Master. He did not consider any opposition on scriptural matters. Though, the Jewish believers from Jerusalem compelled him to do so. They wanted part of the Mosaic Law to be adopted as part of the gospel of Christ (Acts 15:1-29).

Question 1: *What is the universal gospel?*

The universal gospel is the good news of salvation for both boys and girls. There is no discrimination against anyone in any generation. **“And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do”** (Galatians 2:2,7,10).

COMMUNICATION OF THE UNIVERSAL GOSPEL
(Galatians 2:1-3; Matthew 24:14; Mark 14:9; Acts 15:36-41; 21:20; 23:11; 24:21; 28:22-25)

“Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also” (verse 1). Paul had been preaching the gospel for fourteen years in the Gentile nations. He maintained the same message in all these nations. When he came to Jerusalem, he preached the same before the apostles despite oppositions.

Question 2: *What are the contents of Paul's message?*

Apostle Paul's message from the beginning includes:

1. Jesus, the Son of God (Acts 9:20);
2. Salvation, only through Christ (Romans 1:16);
3. Pardon through the suffering of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:17);
4. Christ's death, burial and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15: 1-4);
5. Repentance from sin (Galatians 5:19-21);
6. The rapture of the saints (1 Corinthians 15:51-57);
7. The judgment of the unrighteous (Romans 2:16);
8. Resurrection of the dead (1 Thessalonians 4:16);
9. Christian consecration and service (Romans 12:1, 2);
10. Perfect Christian love;
11. Christian giving, etc.

His message was strong and different from what the Jewish brethren used to know. It wrought wonderfully to the massive conversion of the Gentiles in many countries. The uninformed Jewish believers were confused and sought to subvert the faith of these Gentiles. Based on this, Paul had divine revelation to go to Jerusalem to clear their misconception. Arriving at Jerusalem, he communicated the same message he had preached in the Gentile world privately to them which were of reputation. His reason for doing this was not to cause division among the brethren. He did not want a situation where the false brethren would bring confusion to his Jewish converts who lived in the Gentile nations. He did not want his labour to be in vain. For he said; **“lest by any means I should run, or had run,**

in vain" (verse 2). This shows how wise Paul was and the Bible says that he that wins souls is wise. Youths should be wise preachers.

Question 3: *Why did Paul go to Jerusalem with Barnabas and Titus?*

Paul had companions who labored in Christ together with him. He was not a lone ranger. No one can be too strong or knowledgeable to do God's work alone. Therefore, Christian youths should partner with youths of like precious faith in their schools, neighborhood and church to reach out to unsaved youths. Paul and Barnabas were jointly appointed by the Holy Spirit, commissioned by the church and sent into the Gentile nation (Acts 13:2).

It is notable that they were together for fourteen years. Paul, by taking Titus along was to confirm and preserve the pure Christian messages he had been preaching. It was to prove to them that he was not a double standard preacher. Titus, a Gentile believer and a co-laborer with Paul had served in the ministry as being uncircumcised. He brought him therefore, to make them know his decision and determination to uphold the truth of the gospel. Titus' presence made it clear that Paul sought not to please man nor has respect of persons in ministry. Christian youths are to preach the word of God without fear or favor. They should not add sentiments when preaching God's word. It is only the truth that can set sinners free.

CONSPIRACY AGAINST AN UNCOMPROMISED PREACHER OF THE GOSPEL (Galatians 2:4,5; Proverbs 6:19; 2 John 9,10; Galatians 1:8,9; Revelation 22:18,19)

There were false brethren from Jerusalem who were opposed to Paul's preaching. They came into the Gentile church secretly to spy him. Instead of seeking the expansion of God's Kingdom, they sought to instill what would lead believers into bondage. They sought the promotion of circumcision in a manner which negated the doctrine of salvation by grace. If Paul had allowed that, it would have led the Gentile brethren into bondage. That would have made void the cross of Christ which provided for full salvation. It is the suffering of Christ through His

substitution for man's sins that brought the mercy and grace of God. This also brought about total forgiveness and justification from sin. Paul, discerning who they were, did not submit or give them any room to promote their false belief.

Question 4: *What should be our reaction when false brethren come in to subvert the faith of believing youths?*

“To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour” (Galatians 2:5). Paul did not give them any place in his ministry. He did not allow their secret presence to affect his ministration. He refused to regard their personality or position in the church. This should be the attitude of heaven minded boys and girls. Whenever any false preacher comes to you, you should be able to identify them. The Bible says that by their fruits, you shall know them. They always come with false preaching to weaken believers' faith or lure them into sin. They try all the time to dilute the word of God to make believers shift their scriptural convictions. Their aim is to make merchandise of them, make shipwreck of their faith and make them twice children of hell. You should not be in subjection to them even for a second. Do not respect their persons and positions in the church. Run from and report them immediately.

Question 5: *What is the danger of becoming a false preacher?*

“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8). It is true that Christ commanded all believers to go into the world and preach the gospel, and this we must obey urgently. However, believers must beware of what message they preach. There is great punishment for those who preach strange doctrines. Anyone who engages in false teaching will be accursed. **“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the**

book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (Revelation 22:18,19). There is still opportunity for any youth who engages in false teaching to repent before it is too late.

COMMITMENT OF UNDIVIDED PREACHERS OF THE GOSPEL (Galatians 2:6-10; 2 Peter 3:15,16; Luke 11:17; 1Corinthians 1:10)

“But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles)” (Galatians2: 7,8). All preachers of the gospel must be committed to the preaching of the true gospel.

There are various segments of the society. Therefore, different people should reach them for Christ without competition or contradiction.

Question 6: *What should be our attitude to other soulwinners?*

“And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision” (verse 9). We should support and encourage other soulwinners through prayers and give them the right hand of fellowship. We should put off our differences and be committed to the preaching of the gospel of Christ. Our primary duty is to **“...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature”** (Mark 16:15).

LESSON 697

JUSTIFICATION AND RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH

MEMORY VERSE: “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).

TEXT: Galatians 2:11-21

In the earlier part of this chapter, Apostle Paul declared to the Galatian church his call to the Gentiles. He also resolved contention by mutual understanding. As Christian youths, whenever there is any misunderstanding among us, it is expected that we allow the Spirit of God to direct us in resolving it rather than using carnal method. **“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord”** (Hebrews 12:14).

In this study, Paul proceeds to the teaching on justification and righteousness by faith in Christ. We learn from the dialogue between apostle Paul and Peter on issues relating to relationship and practical lifestyle. As Christian youths, whenever we are in a relationship or practicing our faith, it should point people to Christ and not away from Him. **“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. And whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men”** (Colossians 3:17,23).

REPROVE OF PETER BY PAUL (Galatians 2:11-14; 1 Timothy 5:1, 2,20; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:13-16; Ephesians 5:11; Proverbs 27:5; Acts 10:9-48; 11:12-18; Romans 12:9,10)

“But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed” (verse

11). This passage begins with a conjunction, introducing us to an important issue. Prior to this passage, in their other meetings, there had been harmony and agreement. Peter and the other apostles had acknowledged Paul's commission and approved his teaching (verses 9,10). But now, Paul finds himself compelled to oppose Peter, as he said that **"he was to be blamed"**. This is plain evidence that Apostle Paul did not allow his closeness to Peter stand in his way of upholding the truth. He had no friendship at the expense of the truth of the gospel.

Question 1: *What lessons can we learn from the action of Apostle Paul in this passage?*

"Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear" (1 Timothy 5:20). **"Open rebuke is better than secret love"** (Proverbs 27:5). Whenever sin or error is detected, corrective measure is to be taken immediately rather than backbiting or gossiping. However, as youths, when this must do with an elderly person or a leader, then, such a case is to be reported to the superior officer with the aim of helping such fellow and maintaining purity in the church. This must not be done anonymously¹. **"Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren"** (1 Timothy 5:1).

"For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation" (verses 12,13). This was the reason Apostle Paul openly corrected Peter as he had once said that he was to be blamed. Apostle Peter was doing the right thing by eating with the Gentiles as he had been corrected by the Lord not to call what God has cleansed common (Acts 10:9-48; 11:12-18). However, he forgot the instruction of the Lord and was carried away by the presence of the Jews. Christian youths should know that the moment they forget the commandment of the Lord, they could be carried away by fear of men. So, beware!

Paul the apostle further showed his disappointment by emphasizing that **“insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation”** (verse 13). He knew the life of Barnabas who was like a spiritual father and companion to him. Christian youths should beware, for a leader’s sin is a leading sin and thereby, should not follow the multitude to do evil (Exodus 23:2). **“Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good”** (Romans 12:9). Our love for others must not be deceptive, sectional or based on tribal sentiments. It should be sincere and genuine.

“But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said into Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?” (verse 14). Preachers are expected to live by what they preach. It is hypocrisy to live contrary to what you have professed or preached. The spirit of the world is crafty, cunning, and crooked. The power of the gospel is to correct all that and lead man in a path of entire honesty and truth. A song writer rightly puts it:

*If you say you love the Savior,
If you say you love the Lord,
If you say your sin are forgiven and gone,
Then prove it by the life you live.*

REASON FOR OUR JUSTIFICATION (Galatians 2:15-19; 1:3,4; Romans 3:10,19,20,23-26; 10:3,9; 7:7-24; 5:8-11; Psalm 51:1-6; Hebrews 9: 14; 1 Peter 2:22-24; Ephesians 4:20-24; 5:8-11)

“We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, 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 2:15,16). Being born into a Christian home will accord one the privilege of biblical knowledge which makes the person different from those not from

Christian homes. However, those who are born into Christian homes should know according to the Scripture that justification is not automatic, not even by the works of the law. Justification only comes by faith in Jesus Christ.

Question 2: *What is justification and state reasons why the law cannot justify anyone?*

Justification is God's act of removing the guilt and penalty of sin while at the same time declaring a sinner righteous through Christ's atoning sacrifice. Having been cleared of every guilt of sin, the regenerated stands before God as though he had never sinned. This is not based on any personal merit but based on what Christ had accomplished for mankind by His substitutionary death on the cross at Calvary. The revelation of the scripture is **"...there is none righteous, no, not one: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"** (Romans 3:10, 23). Some youths have tried severally to establish their own righteousness by trying to fulfill the letter of the law and by religious activities. **"For they are being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God"** (Romans 10:3). Apostle Paul before his salvation was once like that (Philippians 3:6), yet sin was not conquered in his life (Romans 7:7-24). **"Therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin"** (Romans 3:20).

The reason why the law cannot justify anyone is that; **"For by the law is the knowledge sin"** (Romans 3:20). The law can only open the sinner's eyes to his sin, but it cannot remove it. The law simply defines sin. Further reason why justification cannot take place only by obedience to the law is **"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them"** (Galatians 3:10). The law stops the mouth of every man, and declares him guilty before God (Romans 3:19,20).

Question 3: *How can a sinner be justified?*

“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” (verse 16). Justification is meant for every living person who is not yet saved and has reached the age of accountability. **“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”** (Romans 5:8). The sinner should first acknowledge his sins (Psalm 51:1– 6); believe in Christ’s atoning blood as the only way to salvation (Hebrews 9:14); confess all known sins and repent totally from them (Psalm 32:5); and believe in Christ for salvation (Romans 10:9). Having been saved through faith in our Lord Jesus, the saved youth should have a clean life as an evidence to show for his justification (2 Corinthians 5:17). Before he was justified, such a 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, such saved youth is like Christ.

“But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbids. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God” (verses 17-19). Apostle Paul made it clear that every born-again youth in the heavenly race should not be found with sin but rather reject them. **“For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them”** (Ephesians 5:8-11). Therefore, Christian youths are to live their lives without pretense.

RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH (Galatians 2:20,21; Genesis 15:6; Galatians 3:6-11; James 2:20-23; Hebrews 6:1,2; Titus 3:3-8; 2 Timothy 1:8,9; Colossians 2:20-23; Romans 6:6; 1 Peter 4:1,2; Exodus 23:2; 1 Corinthians 16:13)

- (1) challenging believers to seek and minister with gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12 : 1 -31 ; 13 : 1 -13; 14 : 1 -40); and
- (2) challenging believers to prepare for the rapture of the saints (1 Corinthians 15:51,52).

As we come to this last chapter of the book, Paul the apostle, whom God used to write the epistle, challenged the Corinthian believers to care and make contributions for the saints. He shows us how we should serve the Lord faithfully and consistently. He also personally sent greetings to those who loved the Lord Jesus Christ. **“The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen”** (verses 21-24).

CONTRIBUTION FOR THE SAINTS (1 Corinthians 16:1-4; Acts 2:44-47; 6:1-3; 11:27-30; 2 Corinthians 8:1-5; Psalm 96:1-9)

“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye” (verse 1). In the early church, poor saints were not allowed to suffer needs. It was the responsibility of other members to make contribution to take care of them.

Question 1: *Mention instances when the early church contributed to meet the needs of other members.*

“And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles’ feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need” (Acts 4:32,34,35). Instances of making provision for the needs of the poor saints in the early church were: (1) immediately the church was born (Acts 2:44-47); (2) when the Antioch

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

Question 4: *What do you understand by the phrase “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live”?*

Apostle Paul testified that he was crucified with Christ, and yet he lives. While the old man was crucified, the new man is alive. **“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin”** (Romans 6:6). This is a proof that he was dead to the world, as well as to the law, and yet alive to God and Christ. Christian youths should understand that though we live in the flesh we must not live after the flesh. The life every born-again youth should live is to be totally influenced by Christ and His word, not by dictates of the flesh and the world. Paul said, **“...nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me”** (verse 20). We must no longer live to ourselves but to God who should be the controller of our lives and activities. **“Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of *his* time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God”** (1 Peter 4:1-2). We must remain loyal to Christ always because of the price He paid at Calvary on our behalf.

“I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (verse 21). Paul the apostle who knew what his past was and how he met Jesus, professed that he did not frustrate the grace of God. This is because he did not allow the awakening of ceremonial law in his life. Though, apostle Peter was found in this mistake, Christian youths should beware not to allow any dogma to interfere with their Christian lives and service. We should remember the express command of God that says **“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). **“Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong”**

(1 Corinthians 16:13). Believers should maintain their righteous life in this sinful and perverse generation, “Others may I cannot”.

LESSON 698

REBUKE FOR REVERTING TO LEGALISM

MEMORY VERSE: “But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith” (Galatians 3:11).

TEXT: Galatians 3:1-29

Our text seeks to explain the law of justification by faith. It shows how believers, especially the Gentiles can have access to full deliverance from sin and the curse of the law. Paul discovered that the church was becoming more orthodox in the compliance with the laws of the Jews. He then asked: “**O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you**” (Galatians 3:1). He asked this question to shock them on how they held on so tenaciously to what the laws said even at the expense of their lives. He then explained the reasons for the Mosaic law and how the law alone cannot save anyone. Rather, it could only lead to the source of true salvation which is Jesus Christ.

Question 1: *Why did God permit the release of the Mosaic laws even though Christ was still coming to fulfil the law?*

“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a school master” (Galatians 3:24,25). The law on its own cannot save or justify anyone. However, with the knowledge of the law and empowerment by the Holy Spirit, anyone that has been saved from sin is able to know what to watch out for and live a life void of offence towards God and man.

DANGERS OF CUSTOMS AND LEGALISM (Galatians 3:1–14; Jeremiah 10:3; Colossians 2:8; 1 Peter 1:18,19,23; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Jude 3,4)

The Galatian church is believed to have been established by Paul the apostle during his first missionary trip. The letter is believed to be written to many churches located in the southern part of the Roman province.

The church seemed to have been composed mainly of converts from paganism (Galatians 4:8). After the establishment of the churches, some people came into the church to lead the people astray by teaching another gospel of salvation centered on the Mosaic laws. This required the members of the church to go through some of the customs of Israel as the people concentrated on the laws rather than on Christ (Galatians 1:1–9). Unfortunately, instead of dissociating themselves from these people, the churches were receptive to them and their teaching, thereby belittling the work done by Paul.

Question 2: Was Paul right in correcting the Galatian church?

Paul was not condemning the Galatians and their personalities but was rather reproving the actions which they had taken. He had shown his love to the church by preaching to them and caring about their welfare. However, they had gone astray by following the customs, hence Paul's description of their actions as being foolish. Paul in trying to contend with their unexplainable actions therefore challenged them as to their Christian gifts and experiences. He asked: **"...Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith...Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh"** (verses 2,3). He also challenged them as to the source of the anointing of their ministers who had ministered miracles among them. **"He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith"** (verse 5). These questions were expected to bring them back to their senses and make them realize that they had forsaken their first love and followed the customs of men.

Question 3: Why did Paul discourage the Galatians from following the Mosaic laws?

The Mosaic laws on their own cannot save any sinner. **“For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh”** (Galatians 6:13). God is not interested in our hearing and following the customs of the law. He is interested in our doing His will and abiding under the grace of Christ. **“For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified”** (Romans 2:13). Paul therefore, used what the people were used to, to explain the principles of justification.

Question 4: What is justification and how can one experience it?

Justification is the act of God’s grace through which one receives forgiveness and remission of sin and is counted righteous before God, through faith in the atoning blood of Jesus. Having thus been cleared of every guilt of sin, the regenerated stands before God as though he had never sinned. This is not based on any personal merit but in the light of what Christ had accomplished for mankind by His substitutionary death on the cross at Calvary (Psalm 32:1,2; Isaiah 1:18; Micah 7:19; Acts 13:38). Justification is not achieved by following religious traditions without an internal experience in Christ. Anyone who has faith in Christ and comes to Him, the Scriptures says that: **“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree”** (verse 13). Christ paid the price for our sins and once any youth yields his life fully to Him and repents of His sins, acknowledging Christ as his Lord and Savior, he becomes one of the children of Abraham. **“That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith”** (verse 14).

DEFINITE COVENANT THROUGH CHRIST (Galatians 3:15–22; Romans 4:1–16; 7:20–25; 8:1–16; John 8:52–58; Acts 3:25; James 2:23)

“Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ” (verse 16). The

covenant that God made with Abraham was to have its fulfillment in Christ. Through Abraham, all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, yet all were in anticipation of the birth, and death of Christ. With Christ's death, the covenant now applies to people from all races and skin colors. Anyone who comes to Christ, he will not be cast away. The Scripture declares: **"Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent"** (Acts 13:26).

It is important that every youth understand that without Christ, man cannot be free from sin. **"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed"** (John 8:36). Freedom from sin, Satan and sicknesses can only come through the blood of Jesus Christ. Many people have tried their best to be righteous by being committed to the law, yet there is an internal struggle that still makes them commit sins. Paul explained the struggle a sinner goes through: **"...I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members"** (Romans 7:23). Despite the presence of the law, yet man is under the captivity of sin. However, with the coming of Christ, there is full salvation by faith. This promise is for all who are willing and ready to come under the protection that is in Christ Jesus. When Jesus saves a youth, takes away the power and influence of sin. **"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) He then receives power to remain righteous and completely free from all condemnation. **"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit"** (Romans 8:1).

DELIVERANCE THROUGH CHRIST'S LOVE (Galatians 3:23–29; Romans 5:8; Ephesians 2:4; 3:19; 5:2; 1 John 3:16; 4:9,10; Jude 21)

Salvation is deliverance from sins and the power of Satan. The Lord knowing that the coming of Christ was going to be years after His promise to Abraham, ensured that "...

before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed" (verse 23). Due to God's love for man, he ensured that there was a plan for man's deliverance. This plan was the law. The law was made to ensure there was right relationships amongst the people, so that the people should not perish. It was also made to ensure that man did not incur the wrath of God by going into sin and getting punished (Romans 6:23a).

Due to the inadequacies of the law of Moses, man could not be delivered from sin without the use of regular blood sacrifices. Hence, **"the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith"** (verse 4). This means therefore that with the presence of Christ today, the law becomes obsolete and complimentary. Christ takes supremacy and we do not need the school master of the law anymore. **"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus"** (verse 26). Christ is not tied to any sectional, regional, national or language barrier, anyone can be saved. **"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus"** (verse 28). Any youth, whether boy or girl; black or white; African or Asian; that comes to Christ can have full access to Abraham's blessings today. **"And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise"** (verse 29). The question is: are you Abraham's seed? Have you been washed in the blood of the Lamb? Are you a partaker of the promises of heirs of Christ? Why delay further, be part of Christ's inheritance.

LESSON 699

ADOPTION AND SONSHIP THROUGH CHRIST

MEMORY VERSE: “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Galatians 4:6).

TEXT: Galatians 4:1-11

The word of God declares that “**All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way...**” (Isaiah 53:6). Hence, we are no more in the care of the Almighty God. In a simple language, “**all have sinned, and have come short of the glory of God**” (Romans 3:23). But, to bring us back to our original place in God’s family, Christ was sent to die on the cross. For as many that would repent of their sins and believe in God through Him would “**receive the adoption of sons**”.

Question 1: What is adoption?

*Adoption is when someone is taken over by another family to enjoy all rights of children in that family. We were all children of wrath by nature. “**Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others**” (Ephesians 2:3). This sinful life placed a lot of limitations upon us.*

LIMITATIONS PLACED ON SINNERS (Galatians 4:1-3; Isaiah 59:1, 2; Psalm 66:18; 50:16; Proverbs 28:13; 14:34; Revelation 21:8,27; John 3:3; Ezekiel 18:30)

“**Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all. But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father**” (verses 1,2). Paul here used an illustration of what happened in the domestic setting to put across a spiritual truth. In a family, a child who would later be the heir of all things, while still growing up, is put under a lot

of restraints and tutoring until he has attained maturity to manage affairs as an adult. At such time, he is sometimes put under discipline just like any other domestic servant and that way he **“differeth nothing from a servant”**.

“Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world” (verse 3). In much similar way, when we were **“children of wrath”**, we **“were in bondage under the elements of the world”**. Sin puts restraints and limitations on our lives while we remained sinners.

Question 2: What are the limitations that sin puts on sinners?

Sin will set a barrier between the sinner and God so that there will be no fellowship. Such a person will not be able to commune with God in prayer or receive guidance and instruction of life. The case of Adam and Eve illustrates this. When they sinned, they died spiritually immediately. Death is the separation between the soul and the body. They were separated from the very essence of life. God sent them out of the garden where they used to enjoy communion with Him in the cool of the day (Genesis 3:8,23,24). **“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). The sinner will not be able to take advantage of any of God’s promises. He is not expected to preach to others. **“But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?”** (Psalm 50:16).

Furthermore, sin will restrain honour from the sinner. Above all, the life of sin will hinder someone from entering the kingdom of God at the end. **“And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life”** (Revelation 21:27).

Question 3: What is God’s expectation from sinning youths?

*A sinning youth should repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. He or she would then become God's son or daughter. The steps are very simple: **A**cknowledge your sins; **B**elieve in God's redemptive power and Christ's atoning sacrifice; **C**onfess your sins to God; **D**epart from the evil ways and **E**mbrace Jesus Christ as your Lord. By so doing, he or she will be ushered into the unlimited privileges of God's children.*

LIMITLESS PRIVILEGES OF THE SONS OF GOD

(Galatians 4:4-7; Romans 8:1-4,14-23; 1 Corinthians 2:9, 10; 1 John 3:1,2,9; Luke 10:19)

"But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (verses 4,5). Sin and the law had long rivaled over the souls of men. The law could not actually achieve what God intended. Then, at the appointed time, He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to defeat or condemn sin in the flesh. For as many as have received Christ into their lives, they are called God's sons and to them are reserved great privileges (Romans 8:1-4).

Question 4: What are the privileges of God's children?

"And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (verse 6). Here we are told that we share of God's Spirit in our lives the moment we become His sons or daughters. Having the Spirit of God in us means very much. We enjoy the privilege of divine guidance. The Spirit of God will guide us into all truth and teach us all things (John 14:26; 16:13). He will also aid our memory. Also, the Spirit of God aids us in prayers. There are so many times we want to pray but we do not even know how or what we should pray for. But the Spirit helps our infirmity. We also have the power to live a righteous life when we become God's children. **"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God"** (1 John 3:9).

"Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (verse 7).

We are no more servants but full heirs of God, having right into all of God's resources as much as Christ does (John 14:12). We have authority in prayer and dominion over unclean spirits. **"Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you"** (Luke 10:19).

LAMENTABLE PITFALLS IN GOD'S CHURCH (Galatians 4:8-11; Colossians 2:6,7; 1 Corinthians 3:1-4; 5:1-5)

"Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods" (verse 8). Paul hereby reminded the Galatian church of their past life. They used to serve Satan and false gods when they had not known God. So many people in the church now were sometimes like that. But God saved us through His mercy. **"For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost"** (Titus 3:3-5). What is now expected is a steadfast life of faith and holiness. God does not expect any moment of backsliding. **"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving"** (Colossians 2:6,7).

But, unfortunately for this church, they had started relapsing into some things they left in the earlier stages of their conversion. Paul lamented thus: **"But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?"** (verse 9). His pain was that this church had deliberately chosen bondage after they had known God. They observed **"days, and months, and times, and years"** (verse 10). He knew the consequence of such poor level of faith-instability of life. He echoed out his worry; **"I am afraid of you, lest**

I have bestowed upon you labour in vain” (verse 11). Paul, as a minister was concerned and he wrote letters to revive their faith in God.

Question 5: *What should be our attitude when there is backsliding in the fellowship?*

“Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; 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 5:19-20). We should show concern rather than criticize. We could sit with them and patiently explain what we know would help them. We could give them literature that address the issue. Finally, we should pray for backsliders to return to God.

LESSON 700

ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

MEMORY VERSE: “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Romans 10:9).

TEXT: Matthew 1:21; Romans 10:8-13; Ephesians 2:8,9

Salvation is a very important part of our relationship with God, that is why the whole Bible is full of teachings on the subject. There are so many events recorded in the Bible which show God’s plan for salvation. The prophets in the Old Testament also emphasized the same point (1Peter 1:10,11). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, also used His ministry to explain and teach salvation through the grace of God. If salvation is so important, we should, therefore, give quality time to study it.

Question 1: *What is salvation?*

Salvation is freedom from sin which leads to a change of life because of repentance and faith in the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. It is also forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation includes freedom from the guilt of sin, the power of sin and the consequence of sin. It is not represented by healing; becoming a member of a Church; changing of name or renouncing of some vices on moral ground. It is not attained on human merits by fasting, doing religious activities or going on pilgrimage. Salvation is not aimed to make us turn a new leaf but to make us live a new life in Christ. The grace of God teaches us to deny all ungodly acts and live soberly, righteously and godly in this present evil world (Titus 2:11).

It is unfortunate that some youths who claim to be Christians do not have assurance of salvation. Their story of conversion is very weak and unclear. On the other hand, there are those who have false hope. They have strong

confidence that they are saved but on a wrong foundation of wrong doctrines. This study is to help us check and establish our feet on the solid rock.

THE PLACE OF GRACE AND FAITH IN SALVATION:
(Ephesians 2:8,9; Titus 2:11; Romans 10:9-13; 4:16; 2 Corinthians 9:8)

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8,9). Salvation does not come by merely doing the works of the law. Also, salvation does not grant indulgence in sin (Romans 6:1,2).

Question 2: *How can we experience genuine salvation?*

The word of God tells us that, **“by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin”** (Romans 3:20). Our justification is based on our acceptance of the grace of God and the faith we have in the atoning work of Christ. To become saved, a sinner should do the following: **One**, acknowledge his sins (Romans 3:23); **Two**, confess them to God (Proverbs 28:13); **Three**, forsake the sins (Isaiah 55:6,7); **Four**, accept Jesus into his heart as Lord and Savior (Romans 10:9-13; Revelation 3:21). God’s offer of salvation is by grace. Grace means the favor of God which we receive without any merit or work. It is the provision of God for mankind. It is help for the helpless. It is **God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense**. Salvation is the object of grace. Faith is the mechanism through which man receives salvation. **“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). Faith in the Lord keeps us going in the way of salvation. **“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”** (Hebrews 11:6). Also, daily prayer for God’s grace would keep us strong enough to withstand temptations (Hebrews 4:16).

ASSURANCE OF SALVATION AND ITS FRUITS (John 3:15- 19,36; 5:24,39; 6:47; Acts 10:43; 13:39; Romans 10:9,10; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 John 1:9; 2:1-5; 3:6-11; 4:15; 5:1,10-13)

When we repent of our sins and forsake them, God forgives us. However, the devil may come to create doubts in our hearts, making us to think that we did not feel the salvation. This is where many of us have problem with the assurance of salvation. We think we should feel something or should have shed tears before we could claim salvation. After God has given them salvation, some think that, because they are not feeling happy in a situation, they may have lost the experience. While the experience of salvation may be accompanied by these, it is important to note that they are not the main proofs of salvation. There are basic things that give us the assurance of salvation.

Question 3: *What is assurance of salvation?*

Assurance of salvation means a firm and confident understanding that one's sins are forgiven. It means to be sure that one is born again and is a child of God. Anyone that lacks this assurance cannot overcome sin, Satan, the world and temptations. We receive this assurance of salvation through the Spirit and the word of God. **“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God”**. **“But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach”** (Romans 8:14; 10:8).

Question 4: *How do we know that we are saved?*

Our salvation is conditioned on our faith in Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior which results in a change of life. **“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). Specifically, our lives begin to touch others in a positive way. There will be daily victory over sin, love and regard for God and other fellow human beings. **“But 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).

Question 5: *How can a saved youth maintain his assurance of salvation?*

If a youth has already experienced genuine salvation, he should maintain it with a strong assurance. **“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving”** (Colossians 2:6). To maintain our assurance, we should pray and read the Bible daily (John 5:39; Acts 17:11,12); keep the new life experience (1 John 3:6,7,10); fellowship with believers of like precious faith and this will help to get constant admonition and encouragement (Hebrews 10:25).

DANGER OF NEGLECTING THE GREAT SALVATION:
(Hebrews 2:1-3; 12:25; Ezekiel 18:4; Romans 6:23)

“Therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip” (Hebrews 2:1). The word of God tells us to give attention to what we are hearing. All the preaching from our leaders and their representatives should be taken seriously. They teach us how to be saved and maintain it. Unfortunately, many youths turn a deaf ear to their instructions. This is very dangerous!

Question 6: *What is the danger of neglecting the message of salvation?*

“For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him” (Hebrews 2:2,3). Disobedience to the instructions given to the people by angels in the Old Testament brought upon them a very serious punishment. It could be clearly deduced¹ that those who disobey God’s instruction would be punished. Any youth, who is not yet born again is, therefore, in danger of the wrath of God.

This also goes to those who are born again; we are to hold fast our salvation experience. Persecutions and

temptations may come to make us reconsider our decision but we should hold fast. **“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man takes thy crown”** (Revelation 3:11).

LESSON 701

THE SERVICE OF CONSECRATED SAINTS

MEMORY VERSE: “The gold for the things of gold, and the silver for the things of silver, and for all manner of work to be made by the hands of the artificers. And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the LORD?” (1 Chronicles 29:5).

TEXT: Romans 12:3-8

Apostle Paul had previously dealt with the doctrine of salvation and justification by faith. He revealed that faith is the basis of a believer's salvation and emphasized that genuine salvation in Christ leads to commitment and consecration. In addition to these doctrines, he showed the practical directions to be followed, which are: truth and duty. He had given general exhortations, but now proceeded to practical discussion on the way believers should conduct their gifts in the church of the living God. **“For I say, through the grace of God 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 has dealt to every man the measure of faith”** (Romans 12:3).

Question 1: *Why should saved youths serve the Lord?*

From the opening verse of this chapter, we have the revelation of the necessity of consecration and submission to Christ. Therefore, because of the inestimable love of Christ, we ought to serve Him.

THE PLACE OF HUMILITY IN GOD'S SERVICE: (Romans 12:3,16; Luke 14:11; Proverbs 16:18,19; 25:27).

In the plan of God, He does not only work out our salvation as youths, He saved us so that we also can serve Him. Therefore, He has made available various gifts for us. But to be useful in God's service, we must be humble, for humility precedes service and usefulness.

Question 2: *What is humility?*

The priceless Christian virtue to be possessed by any youth who wants God to use him is humility. It is a modest attitude in which an individual sees himself as insignificant irrespective of what he possesses or has done. There is nothing we have or have done which we have not received from the Lord. God gives us the grace and gifts to serve Him. Whether you have outstanding talent in playing instrument, good voice to sing, and other talents, God gave them to you for His service. Therefore, apostle Paul enjoins us to think soberly, according to the measure of faith God has imparted on us. The gift a youth has tends to make him proud, and look down on others. Know that God detests pride and that it brings curse in Christian service. It destroys whatever we do for God.

Question 3: *Why are some boys and girls proud?*

Many boys and girls are proud because of the gifts or talents which they possess. These gifts and talents may be physical, spiritual, material, academic or social. But pride shortens ministries. **“But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble”** (James 4:6). It is only when youths are humble that God can use them for His glory. As Paul, the apostle underscores the need for every consecrated believer to serve the Lord, he warned against the nature of pride as it is common with man to exaggerate his abilities and merits. Due to the importance of the subject of humility, he re-emphasized it in verse sixteen: **“Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate”**. No matter what you think you are, the gift you have, whatsoever you have done for the Lord as a youth, you should voluntarily condescend¹ and assume equality with other boys and girls. **“For whosoever exalted himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted”** (Luke 14:11). If you realize that your salvation, gifts or talents are by grace, pride will be shut out.

To be useful for Christ, and give acceptable service, pride, vainglory and boasting must not be your way of life. It is

written, **“Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Better it is to be a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud”** (Proverbs 16:18,19). Paul the apostle showed the example by attributing whatever he was to the grace of God. He did not appeal to his office as an apostle or his authority. **“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 given me”** (1 Corinthians 15:10).

THE POTENCY OF DIVERSE GIFTS (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-31; Ephesians 4:6; 1 Peter 4:10,11)

After laying the foundation of humility as a necessary condition for acceptable service to the Lord, Paul the apostle moved on to talk about the potency of the various gifts in the body of Christ. **“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 everyone member one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith”** (Romans 12:4-6). To make clear his teaching, he used the natural body to illustrate the various gifts in the body of Christ. Every part of the natural body plays a distinct supportive role necessary for the existence of the whole body. The members of the natural body are not disjointed, but one organized, coordinated and cooperating system. Likewise, the body of Christ of which saved youths are, being many, should be one. **“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of one body, being many, is one body: so is Christ”** (1 Corinthians 12:4).

Question 4: Why should there be unity among youths in the fellowship?

From the natural body, all the diverse parts are united. In that way, wholeness is achieved in the body. Each part complements the others. Unity will foster the presence of God in the church and will make the church to stand firm

and be able to contend against sin, Satan and the society. **“But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every Kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth”** (Luke 11:17). Unity makes each member to focus and develop their talent which will enhance perfection in part and whole. **“For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building”** (1 Corinthians 3:9). Additionally, there must be unity among Christian youths. Where this is absent, there will be strife, division, competition and confusion. The word of God reveals that God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). God gives different gifts to different youths, and these should be used profitably for the edification of the body of Christ. Disunity will delay progress, defeat the purpose of Christ for the church, destroy lives, decrease our usefulness and deprive us of our rights. **“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! ... For there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore”** (Psalm 133:1-3).

THE PERTINENT CONDITION FOR YOUTHS’ USEFULNESS (Romans 12:4,5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-18; 3:9-15)

There are conditions to be met by saved youths to be useful in the body of Christ which must not be overlooked. **“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). From these verses of the scripture, one of the conditions for usefulness is to have the grace of God. Gifts are given according to the grace that we have. There must be a balance between gift and grace in our lives; otherwise youths might misuse the gift of God.

Other conditions for our usefulness in the body of Christ are: waiting and developing our ministry. Our faith should be developed. This is necessary because the more our

faith grows, the more our proclamation of the gospel. If you are gifted as a teacher, remain in it, and mould immortal souls for heaven in the school fellowship. Also, youths must be diligent, disciplined and developed to serve the Lord. Laziness and disorderliness destroy ministry. Study the word of God, prayerfully possess a humble spirit and use your gift daily in God's service. **"My son, be not now negligent: for the LORD hath chosen you to stand before him, and that ye should minister unto him and burn incense"** (2 Chronicles 29:11).

Question 5: *Mention some Bible characters that misused the gift of God.*

Some gifted youths become very proud, disrespectful, have disregard for leadership and authority when God starts using them in school fellowship, youth home success fellowship, youth choir, etc. This often leads to the destruction of such youth. In the Bible, Cain was full of youthful, physical strength, and he used it to kill his younger brother. Absalom was very handsome and intelligent, he used it to rebel against his father the king, and this led to his untimely death. John the beloved and James his brother wanted to tread that path during Christ's earthly ministry but Christ quickly made them realize that, it is not the spirit of which New Testament believers are made. Now, the challenge is to every youth today to make up his mind to be useful to God.

LESSON 702

THE RAPTURE

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” (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 15:51-58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Rapture is one of the teachings of the Bible commonly referred to as the first phase or stage of the Second Coming of Christ. This opens the teachings of the last days’ events known as eschatology. The rapture refers to the sudden catching away of the believers to meet the Lord in the air. It involves the raising of the dead in Christ and changing of those who are alive in Christ. The rapture will take place before the Great Tribulation and can happen any time from now. **“In a twinkling of an eye [without a moment’s warning] the trumpet shall sound” “and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 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”** (1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17). Rapture is the present expectation of the saints. It is the next event in the program of God for the Church age. Every Christian youth is to learn about and get prepared for this great event in holiness and righteousness of life.

RAPTURE: THE GREATEST EVENT OF OUR TIME: (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Philippians 3:11,20,21)

“And the dead in Christ shall rise first; 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” (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

Question 1: *What do you understand by the term Rapture?*

Rapture is the greatest event of all ages that the Church is waiting for. It is the catching away of all true

believers in Christ to meet the Lord in the air. Christ, at the end of His first advent, was in like manner, taken up in the air to go and prepare a place for His own. The parting promise from God was that Jesus will return in like manner to receive His ‘Bride’ to be with Him forever (Acts 1:9-11; John 14:1-3).

The rapture is not the same as the Second Coming of Christ. At the rapture, Christ will appear in the air but He will not be visible to the inhabitants of the earth. His mission then will be to resurrect all dead saints, who, along with the living believers, will put on immortality and shall be caught up to be with Him in the air. This event will take place **“in the twinkling of an eye”**. This will take place before the great and terrible day of the Lord, when the wrath of God will be poured down from His cup of indignation without mixture. This event is called the Great Tribulation. The Second Advent will not take place until after the Great Tribulation.

Question 2: *When is rapture going to take place?*

“And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?”

“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only” (Matthew 24:3, 36). The time of the rapture is unknown. It will be heralded by the voice of the archangel and the blowing of trumpets signaling the end of the Church age (1 Thessalonians 4:13-15).

RAPTURE: A MYSTERY TO OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS (Isaiah 26:20; 9:6; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Corinthians 15:51-58; Genesis 5:24, 2 Kings 2:11,12)

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51). The rapture was a mystery unknown to the Old Testament saints and prophets. God had expressed this great event in two different ways in the Scripture to assure us of its certainty. First, it was illustrated in Enoch and Elijah, the two living saints who did not taste death, but were translated in a moment of time and caught up in the air

(Genesis 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11,12). Second, it was illustrated in Christ in the New Testament. He died, was buried and resurrected. While He talked with His disciples on Mount Olivet, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight (Acts 1:9-11).

The rapture which was a mystery to the Old Testament prophets marks the end of the Church Age, also referred to as the time of the Gentiles (Luke 21:24). However, known to God are all His works from the foundation of the earth. In His mercy, He interrupted His program for Israel with the interpolation of Church Age. Christ, the Messiah came for His people but they rejected Him (John 1:11), and God turned to the Gentiles to take a people for Himself. The rapture will mark the end of this special period of grace. Does this mean that God has forsaken His people Israel forever? Far from it. God will resume His program with Israel immediately after the rapture. Thus, ushering in the beginning of the Seventieth week in Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27).

RAPTURE: ITS IMMINENCE AND OUR PREPAREDNESS
(1 John 3:1-3; Amos 4:12; Hebrews 10:37; Matthew 24:5-12,30-39)

“For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry” (Hebrews 10:37). Any moment from now, the trumpet shall sound and He that shall come will come and will not tarry. It is very certain that Christ is coming back again. He assured the Church of the certainty of His coming (John 14:1- 3). Angels proclaimed it; apostles and saints throughout the ages preached it. All the signs of His coming are daily being fulfilled.

Question 3: *What are the signs to show that we are close to the time of the rapture?*

Christ, answering a pertinent question asked by His disciples on “**...What shall be the sign of thy coming...**” (Matthew 24:3), gave in graphic detail what would be happening on earth shortly before His Second Coming (Matthew 24:5-12,30-39). He highlighted the following as what to expect: **(i)** Many false Christ's will arise to deceive many unsuspecting

believers; **(ii)** There will be wars and rumors of war. **(iii)** Famines (global economic recession); **(iv)** Pestilences **(v)** Earthquakes in divers' places; **(vi)** There will be persecution of Christ's followers and some cases of martyrdom; **(vii)** The emergence of many false prophets; **(viii)** Backsliding from the faith will be on the increase; **(ix)** More people will be given to pleasure and merry-making than those seeking the Lord.

The Scripture also predicts the conditions, characterized by a system of denials, which will be prevalent within the visible Church, shortly before Christ's return. There will be a denial of God (2 Timothy 3:1-5), a denial of Christ (1 John 2:18; 4:3), a denial of Christ's return (2 Peter 3:3,4), a denial of the faith of Christian living (Jude 18) and a denial of authority. All these signs are being fulfilled before our very eyes.

Question 4: How can a youth get prepared for the rapture?

To qualify to partake in the rapture, a youth must be genuinely born again, live a transparent holy life, walk daily in the light, do service for God, watch and pray always (John 3:3; Hebrews 12:14; John 4:35-38; 9:1-4; 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17).

All the signs preceding the Second Advent of Christ are all fulfilled, a clear indication that the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is very close and the time of the rapture is much closer. Sinning church members will not be able to go at the rapture, though saved before and baptized in water. Careless and compromising preachers will miss the rapture; it does not matter what Christian work they may have done in the past. All such people together with backsliders and sinners outside the church will be left behind to face the Great Tribulation.

Knowing that these things shall be; that the rapture will occur unannounced, and it is very imminent, what manner of persons ought believers to be? Sinners are to make haste to repent and embrace Christ as their Savior. The Saints of God are to watch and pray lest that day comes upon them unprepared (Matthew 24:42-44).

LESSON 703

DIVINE JUDGMENT ON ELI'S POSTERITY

MEMORY VERSE: "Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me forever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed" (1 Samuel 2:30).

TEXT: 1 Samuel 2:27-36

Eli was the high priest in Israel, and was from a descendant of Ithamar, Aaron's youngest son. He judged Israel for forty years (1 Samuel 4:18). He pleased the Lord as a high priest but failed as a father because he was not vigilant over his children. Therefore, the Lord sent a man of God to warn him of an impending judgment. The Bible commands parents to **"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it"** (Proverbs 22:6). As youths, we are expected to obey them. **"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right"** (Ephesians 6:1). In the case of Eli's sons, they did not obey their father. **"If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall intreat for him? Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them"** (1 Samuel 2:25).

Question 1: What were the sins of Eli's sons?

"Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD" (1 Samuel 2:12). These young men were described as the sons of Belial because they did not know the Lord. They were also called that because they committed immorality with women who came to worship God in the temple. They were greedy and pilfered the offering of the Lord. They lacked righteousness, self-control, purity of life and the fear of God. As a judge and

high priest, Eli had power to correct the situation but he did not. Therefore, God pronounced judgment on him and his family.

FORFEITURE OF PRIESTHOOD THROUGH SIN: (1 Samuel 2:27-30; 1 Kings 13:1-6; Daniel 4:24,27; Ezekiel 3:17; Jeremiah 18:8-10; Exodus 28:1; Numbers 18:7)

A man of God was sent to tell Eli the Lord's displeasure concerning the sins of Hophni and Phinehas. The Scripture says: **"The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked..."** (Nahum 1:3). He will not release His judgment without warnings. The purpose of His warnings is to give room for repentance. In our text, the man of God was faithful and courageous in delivering the message to Eli. As Christian youths, we are to be faithful in preaching the gospel, warning every man of his evil ways. To achieve this, we need the infilling of the Holy Spirit to give us boldness and courage (Micah 3:8).

"And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel?" (verse 28). God chose the family of Aaron to be priests forever. But Eli and his sons thwarted His plan and purpose because of their sinful lifestyle. They forfeited the priesthood (1 Kings 2:26,27).

Question 2: Mention other people in the Bible who forfeited their blessings or ministry through sinful lifestyle.

The Scripture is full of examples of those who forfeited their blessings or ministry through sinfulness. They include: Esau (Genesis 25:27-34; Hebrews 12:15-17), Saul, the first king of Israel (1 Samuel 15:22-26), Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:15-20), Demas (2 Timothy 4:10), etc. These examples should serve as a warning to contemporary believers. Backsliding may lead to forfeiture of divine blessings and ministry in the Lord. The Scripture says: **"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come"** (1 Corinthians 10:11).

“Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people?” (verse 29). Hophni and Phinehas dishonored God, destroyed His worship and worked against the spiritual welfare of His people. Also, God charged Eli of honoring his sons above Him. We must be careful that we do not take the goodness of God for granted. We must serve Him with grace and godly reverence to avoid the same judgment.

Question 3: *How can we maintain our priesthood as believers to the end?*

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). Believing youths are priests of the Lord today (Revelation 1:5,6). To maintain our priesthood in the Lord to the end, we must daily live a righteous life, read and meditate on the word of God, watch and pray, live in complete obedience to the Lord, live a humble life, keep believing the Lord to use us for His glory and be ready for heaven. The exhortation of the Lord to all is, **“Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it”** (Colossians 4:17).

FRIGHTFUL PUNISHMENT OF THE SINFUL: (1 Samuel 2:31-34; 4:10,11,18; 3:11-14; 14:3; 1 Kings 2:26,27; Hebrews 10:31)

The judgment on Eli and his household was a frightful one. It could be described as “strange punishment”. **“Is not destruction to the wicked? and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity?”** (Job 31:3). People like Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar and Herod received such punishment from the Lord. No youth should wait to receive such strange punishment.

Question 4: *What were the judgments passed on the house of Eli?*

“And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve

thine heart: and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age” (verse 33). The judgments passed on the house of Eli are as follows: one, the family’s right to priesthood would be cut off. Two, the lives of the people in Eli’s house would be shortened. Three, the two sons of Eli would die in one day. These pronouncements should have awakened him to flee from the wrath to come. But Eli’s sin of indulging his children had weakened his spiritual sensibility².

Question 5: Was the prophecy concerning Eli’s household fulfilled?

“So, Solomon thrust out Abiathar from being priest unto the LORD; that he might fulfil the word of the LORD, which he spake concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh” (1 Kings 2:27). The Scripture cannot be broken. Heaven and earth may pass away; the word of God will not go unfulfilled to the very detail. The prophecy was fulfilled. **“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”** (Hebrews 10:31). The judgment on Eli and his house is a representation of the impending judgment on the sinful world. The warnings of God are being sounded by His ministers but some youths are adamant in their sins. As a sinning youth, today is the best time to reconcile with your Creator. Do not allow sinful pleasures to drag you into hell eternally. **“... Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts”** (Hebrews 4:7)

FAITHFUL PRIEST IN HIS SERVICE (1 Samuel 2:35,36; 1 Kings 2:35; Ezekiel 44:15,16; Acts 13:22,23)

“And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed forever” (verse 35). Anytime a man appointed by God disappoints Him, He always replaces him with another man who will be faithful. It is a privilege to serve the almighty God. We should pray for grace to serve Him faithfully and allow His grace and anointing into our lives to enable us to fulfil our ministry.

Question 6: Mention those who were replaced by others in the service of the Lord.

David, a faithful shepherd replaced Saul, the first king of Israel, who was disobedient to the word of God. **“And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will”** (Acts 13:22). Matthias replaced Judas Iscariot who forfeited his ministry and apostleship through transgression (Acts 1:23-26). In the case of Eli and his household, Zadok the priest replaced them (1 Kings 2:35). Therefore, to avoid this, we must serve the Lord faithfully in holiness all the days of our lives (Luke 1:74,75).

There are rewards for those who serve Him faithfully. One, they will shine as stars forever (Daniel 12:3). Two, there will be a book of remembrance for them (Malachi 3:16-18). Three, they will enjoy abundant blessings here on earth (John 15:16). Therefore, Christian youths are enjoined to be faithful in their service to the Lord. **“Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord”** (1 Corinthians 15:58).

LESSON 704

GOD REVEALS HIMSELF TO SAMUEL

MEMORY VERSE: “And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD” (1 Samuel 3:21).

TEXT: 1 Samuel 3:1-21

The call and commission of Samuel marked the beginning of a new era in Israel. He was called to be a priest and prophet (1 Samuel 7:8-10; 3:20). He came when the worship of God and the priesthood had been polluted by the house of Eli. He was not influenced by the lifestyle of the sons of Eli. Rather, he lived a righteous and prayerful life. He served the Lord from his young age till he died (1 Samuel 2:11,18,21,26; 3:1; 25:1). The life of Samuel is a challenge to us today. The Lord is calling all youths to salvation and service. It is only those who live a righteous life that can be useful and profitable in the ministry. The service of the Lord is a spiritual one. Hence, only those who are spiritual can be useful.

Question 1: *Mention youths who were called into the service of the Lord in the Bible.*

“But the LORD said unto me, say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak” (Jeremiah 1:7). The Scripture is filled with examples of young people who were called by God into His service. Some of them are Jeremiah, David, Joseph, Esther, Daniel, Timothy, Philip’s daughters, etc. The command of our Lord Jesus Christ to all saved youths is: “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest” (Matthew 9:37,38).

THE CALL OF SAMUEL (1 Samuel 3:1-10; 2:11,18,21; Romans 8:28,29; Jeremiah 1:4-10)

“And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in

those days; there was no open vision” (verse 1). Samuel got involved in the service of the Lord when he was young. His response to his mother’s consecration on his behalf is a challenge to Christian youths. He was consecrated, committed and courageous in carrying out his ministry. His life was a blessing to his immediate family and the nation.

Samuel’s call to the ministry came at a time when there was great moral and spiritual darkness in Israel. It was a time when the word of the Lord was scarce and open vision was not common. When the truth is missing in a church, the hearts and lives of young people will be filled with evil and darkness. Also, they will lack ability to live righteous lives. This was the state before the call of Samuel. We are called to preach the gospel of good news to sinners. Samuel was not afraid of Israel’s deteriorated spiritual state. We should not be afraid or discouraged by the sinful condition in our schools and neighborhoods as we get involved in the work of the Lord.

Question 2: *How can sinning youths be reached with the gospel of Christ?*

“And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him” (Matthew 4:19,20). The call and commission to preach the gospel is for every saved youth. We are saved to serve. We must pray, read and meditate on the word of God always. This will help us to know how to apply the word appropriately to different sinners.

“And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep; That the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I” (1 Samuel 3:3,4). In the night, the Lord called Samuel but he did not immediately discern the voice of God. The Lord called him three times and he ran to Eli without any complaint. He was prompt and ready to serve. After the third time, Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. He then instructed Samuel to say: **“Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth”** (verse 9).

Question 3: *What lessons can we learn from Samuel when God called him?*

“And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth” (verse 10). Young Samuel is a role model to the youths today. His conduct, character and conversation show that he knew the Lord. He was humble and ready to do what his master Eli bid him to do. He never complained of his sleep being interrupted. He obeyed the instruction of Eli and the Lord revealed His message to him. We need the grace of God to be like Samuel.

However, to hear from God, we must be saved and have personal relationship with Him. The Lord reveals Himself by His Spirit and through the Scriptures to His people (John 10:14,27). Examples of those who heard from God include Peter (Acts 10:19), Philip (Acts 8:29), Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:2).

THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN (1 Samuel 3:11-14,18; 2:27-36; 2 Kings 21:10-12; Jeremiah 19:3; Isaiah 39:8)

“And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of everyone that heareth it shall tingle” (verse 11). The Scripture says: **“He, that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy”** (Proverbs 29:1). Through a man of God sent to him, the Lord warned Eli of the consequences of allowing his sons to defile the priesthood (2 Samuel 2:27-36). Now, the Lord further used the young Samuel to inform Eli of the same thing but he did not hearken to Him. God does not change. It is man that must change by repenting of his sins. Therefore, the Lord vowed to judge the house of Eli and this eventually came to pass.

Question 4: *What was the cause of this severe judgment on Eli and his sons?*

“For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not” (verse 13). One of the reasons for the severe judgment was that the sons of Eli made themselves vile or unclean before the Lord. Also, Eli knew about their sins but did not restrain or discipline them. Here we learn that there is need for

discipline or rebuke in the house of God for any sinful act.

Question 5: *What is God's expectation from the people He warns?*

“... And he said, It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good” (verse 18). When God warns, He expects His children to repent and return quickly to Him. However, Eli did not see the eternal implication of this judgment. Therefore, he said: **“let him do what seemeth him good”**. This is a nonchalant attitude to serious issues. This attitude was also exhibited by king Hezekiah. Although he was a good, righteous and prayerful king, he was spiritually insensitive at some point. He heard a message from the Lord through prophet Isaiah and his response brought judgment to Israel in later years (2 Kings 20:12-19; 24:10-16). When Ahab and Manasseh, sinful kings, heard the warnings from God, they quickly repented and humbled themselves before Him. Their judgments were postponed till later years (1 Kings 21:25-29; 2 Chronicles 33:9-13). David did the same and received forgiveness from the Lord (2 Samuel 24:10-14, 17, 25). When we receive warning from God, our response should be positive and prompt obedience. Where there is need to repent, we should do it with all humility. **“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 COURAGE FOR SERVICE (1 Samuel 3:15-20; Joshua 1:1, 7, 9; Acts 4:31; 6:8-7:2; 14:1-3)

Samuel was afraid to tell Eli the vision. This was because the pronouncement from the Lord was weighty. Eli pleaded with Samuel not to hide anything from him. **“And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him...”** (verse 18). To deliver such message needs divine courage, boldness and fearlessness. Today, we need this kind of courage to preach the gospel in our schools and neighborhoods.

Question 6: *How can a Christian youth possess courage for God's service?*

“Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee” (Deuteronomy 31:6). The challenge to serve the Lord in these last days is great. It will take youths who have courage, conviction and commitment to move forward in obedience to Him.

There is God-given courage, strength, boldness and fearlessness for every child of God to live and serve Him. To possess this kind of courage, we must pray, study and meditate on the word of God. In addition, Christian youths can receive courage and boldness from the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. The three Hebrew children – Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego - enjoyed God-given courage while in Babylon. This was because they had great and unshakable faith in God.

“And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground” (verse 19). Knowing the Lord experientially as a young person has great advantages. Here, Samuel had a balanced growth spiritually and physically. The evidence is the presence of the Lord with him. The Lord did not let any of his word fail. The life of Samuel should challenge contemporary youths. As a sinner, take the right decision now to accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Therefore, get right with God and everything will fall into its right place.

“And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD” (verse 21). In the days of Samuel, the Lord revealed Himself to him. Today, Jesus Christ is the only One that reveals God to man. You cannot do without Him. **“All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him”** (Matthew 11:27). Therefore, Jesus is the answer to all your questions in this life and hereafter.

LESSON 705

GOD'S GLORY DEPARTS FROM ISRAEL

MEMORY VERSE: “And she said, The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken” (1 Samuel 4:22).

TEXT: 1 Samuel 4:1-22

The constant battles between Israel and the Philistines is illustrative of what happens between a believer and the devil. As God gave Israel victory when they were in right relationship with Him, the same is possible for Christian youths today. In the text, the time for divine punishment upon Eli, his sons and Israel had arrived. The children of Israel were humiliated in battle and everyone ran to his tent. In the process, the ark of God, which represented the divine presence, was taken by the Philistines and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain. As Eli heard this bad news, he fell backward, broke his neck and died. During this time, Phinehas' wife was due to deliver. As she heard the news while she travailed, she died. Before her death, she named the child Ichabod meaning: **“The glory is departed from Israel”**.

Sin, whether privately or publicly committed, has devastating¹, deadly and damnable consequences now and in the future. Youths who live in sin today should know that God will not allow any sinner to go unpunished. The only way of escape from divine punishment is total and complete repentance and faith in Christ. The Scripture says, **“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”** (Romans 10:9,13).

THE DEFEAT AND DEATH OF THE PRIESTS IN ISRAEL:
(1 Samuel 4:1-5,10-18; 17:1-10; Isaiah 59:1,2; Joshua 7:1-5,10-12; Proverbs 1:24-33)

“And the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel: and when they joined battle, Israel was smitten

before the Philistines: and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men” (verse 2). The Philistines had war with Israel in Aphek. But Israel was defeated and thirty-four thousand men were killed (verses 2,10). What a great destruction of lives! The elders of Israel were surprised. They asked: **“Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to day before the Philistines?”** (verse 3).

Question 1: *What was the main reason for the defeat of Israel?*

“Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14:34). The main reason for the defeat of Israel was sin. Sin, whether in the individual, family or nation, will hinder the presence, protection and power of God. Furthermore, Israel must have gone to battle according to the leading of their hearts because there was no directive from God through Samuel. Also, divine direction and process of divine judgment must have been at work. Perhaps, God might have wanted Hophni and Phinehas to be on the battle field the same day to fulfil His word (1 Samuel 2:27-36; 3:11-14). Israel’s way was displeasing to the Lord. Hence, her enemies were at war with her. This was the time for divine discipline.

Question 2: *Why is discipline necessary?*

Discipline can be divine or through human instrument. Most times, it is designed to be the means of correction and blessing. Discipline helps to show the carelessness or evil in our lives. It helps us to search our hearts, pray and return to God before the judgment day. Discipline helps to restrain us from sin and prevent further disobedience (Psalm 119:67). It also helps us to improve our Christian character and relationship with others. It produces in us the virtue of patience, submission and humility. We should allow discipline to work for our good, perfect us and make us conform to the image of Christ.

“And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the

hand of our enemies” (verse 3). The defeat of Israel by the Philistines was an act of divine discipline. The elders asked counsel but not from the Lord. Instead of seeking the Lord through repentance, they looked for a device to compel God to give them victory. Man-made devices cannot grant us access to God or His favor. Therefore, the Lord abandoned them to their own devices.

“So, the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubim: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God” (verse 4). The ark of covenant was a divine symbol of God’s presence. It was significant because it was a divinely appointed symbol of the presence, majesty, holiness, mercy and protection of the Lord on His people. The effectiveness of the ark depends on the fulfilment of the conditions attached to it (Deuteronomy 28:1-28). But Israel abandoned the entire covenant because of the sins of the priests. Therefore, Israel as a nation forgot the knowledge of the law.

Question 3: *How can youths enjoy the presence of God today?*

“And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again” (verse 5). Their aim of bringing the ark to the camp was to employ God or the ark as a talisman, charm or amulet for victory in the battle. Some youths put the Bible, cross or prayer book under their pillow to avoid bad dreams. The only way to enjoy God’s presence, power and protection today is through righteous living after returning to the Lord in repentance (Micah 6:6-8).

The ark was brought out of Shiloh into the camp. Hophni and Phinehas accompanied it there. As soon as the ark arrived the camp, the children of Israel shouted for joy. Yet, Israel experienced the most humiliating defeat. The two sons of Eli were slain and the ark of covenant was carried away. Here, we see the futility¹ of depending on religious symbols (cross, oil, picture of church founder,

rosary, holy water, etc.) without having a right relationship with the Creator. Israel had despised His word. Yet, they wanted Him to fight for them. Whenever the word of God is despised, defeat is certain and great (Proverbs 1:30,31). But when we love, obey and keep His word, great will be our victory.

Question 4: Answer TRUE or FALSE:

- a) *Putting Bible under the pillow will give divine victory in spiritual battle.*
- b) *Hanging the crucifix of Jesus Christ will prevent bad dreams.*
- c) *Wearing clothes with the picture of a church founder will give victory.*
- d) *Wearing the image of Mary guarantees victory in battle.*
- e) *Living a holy life and praying in faith will give us victory in all kinds of battles.*

THE DECISION AND DETERMINATION OF THE PHILISTINES TO FIGHT ISRAEL (1 Samuel 4:6-9; Genesis 11:1-6; Acts 23:12,13; Judges 7:9-14)

“And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore” (verse 7). As the ark of covenant came to the camp of Israel, the people shouted for joy. In the camp of the Philistines, they were afraid and would have run away. They cursed themselves and said that the mighty God who smote the Egyptians with plagues before the Israelites had come to fight for them. This should have been the testimony if the Israelites had obeyed the Lord and lived right. However, the Philistines mustered courage and were determined to fight Israel again. They said: **“Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men, and fight”** (verse 9).

Christian youths must differentiate between the courage, decision and determination of the Philistines and that of God’s children. There is bad courage and good courage.

“Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee” (Deuteronomy 31:6). There is also good and bad decision and determination. **“Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up”** (Daniel 3:16-18). It is bad courage for Christian youths to join ungodly youths to do evil. Punishment awaits those who join the world to do evil (Exodus 23:2).

Question 5: *What is the importance of good decision and determination in pursuing a God-given project?*

“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). A good decision with determination backed up with God-given courage will produce great results in life. It makes the youth to have concentration and focus. Decision and determination will overcome every challenge to success. It makes one to know other alternatives to solving problems. The goal of the project will be achieved within a short time. Therefore, learn not to accept defeat at the least challenge.

THE DEPARTURE OF DIVINE PRESENCE IN ISRAEL:
(1 Samuel 4:19-22; Exodus 33:12-15; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 18:9-11)

As the report of the battle was given to Eli by one of the army who escaped, he could not withstand it. He could not endure the evil report of the scattered, smitten and slain nation. He collapsed, broke his neck and died instantly. Also, as Phinehas' wife heard of these evil reports, she was gripped by sudden labour pains. She gave birth to a baby boy and named him **“Ichabod”** before she died. The household of Eli knew the blessings the nation would miss

because of the ark being captured. The departure of the ark meant loss of divine glory, presence, mercy, peace and power of God.

Question 6: What is the consequence of allowing divine presence to depart from your life and fellowship?

In the same way, the glory of God can depart from a person, family or fellowship. This happens when people are unwilling to fulfil the conditions for the continual presence of God. When we spurn and despise God's warnings, the glory of God will be removed from us and darkness, desolation and death may prevail. No wonder, Moses the man of God prayed thus: **"Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people. And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. And he said unto him, if thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence"** (Exodus 33:13-15). Let us pray always and be ready to obey His word to enjoy His presence in our lives and fellowship.

LESSON 706

GOD CHASTISES THE PHILISTINES

MEMORY VERSE: “But the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, even Ashdod and the coasts thereof” (1 Samuel 5:6).

TEXT: 1 Samuel 5:1-12

The battle between Israel and the Philistines led to the death of thirty-four thousand Israelites including Hophni and Phinehas, Eli’s sons (1 Samuel 4:2,10,18-20). Despite Israel’s defeat, the capture of the ark and the death of the priests, God was still concerned about His honour and glory. The Philistines took the ark to the house of Dagon (idol). The Philistines exalted Dagon to the same level with the almighty God, the Creator of heaven and earth. Through this act, they committed sacrilege. This means disrespect, dishonour and disregard for God. But God who would not share His glory with anyone defended Himself. First, Dagon fell before the ark of the Lord. The next day, the priests of Dagon set it up again and before dawn, it was broken into pieces. Apart from these, the hand of the Lord was heavy upon the people of Ashdod. They were destroyed and plagued with emerods.

Question 1: *What was the divine punishment of the Philistines?*

“And it was so, that, after they had carried it about, the hand of the LORD was against the city with a very great destruction: and he smote the men of the city, both small and great, and they had emerods in their secret parts” (verse 9). The punishment was on both small and great. God punishes young people who live in sin. Examples include Er (Genesis 38:7), Onan (Genesis 38:8-10), Absalom (2 Samuel 18:9), Reuben (Genesis 49:3,4), Simeon and Levi (Genesis 49:5-7), Hophni and Phinehas (1 Samuel 4:11), etc. The only way to escape divine judgment now and in eternity is to turn to God in repentance and

faith in Christ. **“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation”** but **“now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation”** (Hebrews 2:3; 2 Corinthians 6:2).

THE DEFEAT OF DAGON (1 Samuel 5:1-5; Exodus 20:1-7; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6; 10:1-7,14; 1 John 5:21)

“When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon” (verse 2). Without the fear of God, the Philistines took the symbol of His presence to Ashdod, the house of their god. They set the ark by Dagon. In the morning, Dagon fell before the ark of the Lord. This means the ark had the presence and power of God to defend itself. On the second day, the priests of Dagon repositioned it. Again, it fell and its head and palms were cut off. **“And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold; only the stump of Dagon was left to him”** (verse 4). It is important to note that by placing the ark of the Lord side by side with Dagon, they committed sacrilege. They dishonored God. Youths who do not have the fear of God misbehave in the church. They show lack of reverence for holy things. We should learn from Belshazzar, the king of Babylon, who misused holy things and suffered eternally. As Christian youths, we should reject the tendency to worship idols of any form. God’s command is clear: **“Thou shalt have no other gods before me”** (Exodus 20:3).

Question 2: *In what ways do some youths worship idols today?*

There are various forms of idols and mode of idolatrous worship today. These can be in the form of wearing of the crucifix, praying through Mary, the mother of Jesus, hanging the picture of any saint (alive or dead) for worship, etc. Whatever idol you have, God hates it. Repent today and flee from it. **“Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry”** (1 Corinthians 10:14).

DESTRUCTION THROUGH DEADLY DISEASE: (1 Samuel 5:6-9,12; Hebrews 9:27; 10:31; 12:29; Revelation 20:11-15)

“But the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, even Ashdod and the coasts thereof” (verse 6). The hand of the Lord can be upon someone for good or evil depending on the individual's standing with Him. For the Philistines, it was for deadly destruction because of their disrespect and dishonour for Him. They were smitten with a disease called **“emerods”**. Everywhere the ark of the Lord went – Ashdod, Gath or Ekron, there was a great plague upon them.

Question 3: How do some youths disrespect God in churches today?

“Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts. O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth” (Psalm 96:8,9). Despite clear commandments, there are many ways youths disrespect the Lord in the church today. Some of the ways include attending church/special Christian program with the aim of making sinful friends with the opposite gender, refusal to pay tithes and offerings, disobedience to directives from leaders in the church, singing of worldly songs and disobedience to the word of God.

“And it was so, that, after they had carried it about, the hand of the LORD was against the city with a very great destruction: and he smote the men of the city, both small and great, and they had emerods in their secret parts” (verse 9). There is no sin that will go unpunished before the Lord. Some youths think that since judgment is delayed, they will continue in their evil ways. The Scripture says: **“Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil”** (Ecclesiastes 8:11). Remember that **“God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil”** (Ecclesiastes 12:14).

“And the men that died not were smitten with the emerods: and the cry of the city went up to heaven” (verse 12). The cry of the people went up to heaven. This will be like the time of the final judgment when the cry of sinners will go up to heaven. The warning of God comes to you today. Repent and return to God. This is the only way to escape His judgment.

DIVINE SOLUTION TO DEADLY DISEASE (1 Samuel 5: 10,11; 6:1-6; Isaiah 1:18-20)

“Therefore, they sent the ark of God to Ekron. And it came to pass, as the ark of God came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, they have brought about the ark of the God of Israel to us, to slay us and our people. So, they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to his own place, that it slays us not, and our people: for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there” (verses 10,11). Within months, the ark of the Lord brought unutterable plagues and destruction on the Philistines. Both their gods and people received a share of it. Therefore, the elders of the Philistines decided to send the ark back to Israel.

Question 4: *What is the solution to the problem created by sin?*

“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. 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 1:18-20). The only divine solution to the problem of sin is to return to God in repentance and faith in Christ. **“Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon”** (Isaiah 55:6,7). Obey the Lord

today, and you will be at peace with your Creator now and in eternity.

LESSON 707

THE ARK RETURNED TO ISRAEL

MEMORY VERSE: “And they of Bethshemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley: and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see it” (1 Samuel 6:13).

TEXT: 1 Samuel 6:1-21

In our previous studies, we saw that the Philistines moved the ark of God from place to place thinking that that would solve their problems, but it only spread the plagues. When they captured the ark of the Lord, it was a great victory for them and a time of celebration. They thought they had captured the God of Israel and their Helper. Later, they discovered that it would have been better for them to capture Israelites and not the ark which symbolized the presence of their God. The ark dwelt with the Philistines for seven months during which they suffered disasters. Eventually, they decided to return it to Israel.

The Philistines were idol worshipers. Therefore, they consulted their diviners for steps to follow in returning the ark to Israel. What they did was a guess work as they were not sure. **“And see, if it goeth up by the way of his own coast to Bethshemesh, then he hath done us this great evil: but if not, then we shall know, that it is not his hand that smote us; it was a chance that happened to us”** (verse 9). This is a lesson to all. It is only God’s counsel that is sure. God in His mercy guided the ark back to Israel.

THE ARK AMONG THE PHILISTINES (1 Samuel 6:1-9; 5:3-6,9 11-12; Judges 13:1; Hebrews 13:8; 2 Samuel 6:3; Romans 12:1,2)

“And the ark of the Lord was in the country of the Philistines seven months” (verse 1). From the moment, the ark of God was captured, the Philistines were in one problem or the other; their god also was not spared (verse 5). The plague affected their health, their god, the source of their strength and their economy. They thought that with

the passage of time, the plagues would cease and they could have perpetual possession of the ark.

Question 1: *What lesson can youths learn from this?*

It is a common practice for sinners to assume that things will get better while they continue in their sins. They change approach to sin without turning away from it. Punishment for sin cannot be wished away. It is only true repentance that can remove it. The plagues of Egypt would have been fewer if Pharaoh had not hardened his heart. Israel suffered for many years for staying long in sin. What God require from sinners is total repentance (Jeremiah 18:8).

The Philistines were idol worshipers. Therefore, they called for their diviners (wise men). **“And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, what shall we do to the ark of the Lord? tell us wherewith we shall send it to his place”** (verse 2). They were counseled to give a trespass offering which was an indication of acknowledgment of their sin. They were to use objects of their plagues as materials for the offering. These were five golden emerods and five golden mice each representing the number of their lords.

Question 2: *Who is our trespass offering today?*

Youths should remember that the Philistines were idol worshipers. Therefore, their objects of worship were contrary to what God prescribed for the Israelites (Leviticus 5:6). Likewise, it should be noted that Jesus Christ has been made our sin offering. **“For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified”** (Hebrews 10:14). Sinners must repent and accept Jesus as Lord and Savior before they can be saved.

The diviners warned them against hardening their hearts like Pharaoh. **“Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? when he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed?”** (verse 6). This generation of the Philistines were not born when Pharaoh and the Egyptians were plagued but they knew that God could still repeat the same thing if they hardened their hearts.

Question 3: *What lessons can youths learn from the comment of the Philistines' wise men?*

God of yesterday is the same today and forever. He never diminishes in power. What He did in time past, He can still do today. Therefore, messages preached by men of God in the past are as valid as the present time; testimonies of power as of old should stir up our faith; failure to repent will bring God's wrath; and if we repent, we shall receive His mercy.

The wise men then prescribed a procedure which included provision of a new cart to convey the ark to Israel. **“And see, if it goeth up by the way of his own coast to Beth-she'mesh, then he hath done us this great evil: but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that smote us; it was a chance that happened to us”** (verse 9). This implies that all they did were mere guess work. Our God is a God of certainty. He is Omniscient and knows everything. All we need do is to rely absolutely on Him.

THE RESTORATION OF THE ARK (1 Samuel 6:10-19; Psalm 105:38; Isaiah 45:13; Joshua 21:16)

The men did as the priests directed. They made a new cart, tied two kine to it that had never borne a yoke, and shut up the calves at home. They laid the ark upon the cart, and the box with the golden mice and the golden images representing the sickness. Then they turned the kine loose to go their own way without any guidance or any hand to drive or to lead them.

The kine took the straight way to the land of Israel, and went along the highway, drawing the cart behind them. They did not turn to the right hand or to the left. They did not seek to find their own homes or calves. The lords of the Philistines went after them until they came to the borders of the land of Israel. They were glad to see the departure of the ark from their territory. The kine went on their own for over eight miles without human guide and stopped at Bethshemesh. It was supernatural.

Question 4: *What assurance can Christian youths get from the way the kine were guided to Israel?*

“And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not” (Isaiah 58:11). The cows did not miss their way or turn back to the land of the Philistines. We can confidently say that if we are being guided by the Lord, we cannot miss God’s purpose and plan for our lives. God that guided ordinary kine to their destination will safely guide us to our heavenly home.

“And they of Bethshemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley...” (verse 13). Though Israel was passing through hard times because they were under the control of the Philistines at this time, they were not idle. **“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). Youths should be profitably engaged during holiday or when waiting for admission. While at school, they should be studious. **“...and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see it”** (verse 13). Seeing the ark made them rejoice because it was a sign of restoration to them (Psalm 126:1-3). The cart stopped at Joshua’s field in Judah on a stone. This was one of the cities assigned to the sons of Aaron. There, the Levites and the men of Bethshemesh offered burnt offering to the Lord.

THE ARK AT BETHSHEMESH (1 Samuel 6:19-21; Nahum 1:3; Acts 10:34; Exodus 19:21; Numbers 4:5; 2 Samuel 6:8,9; Micah 6:6,7)

The joy of the people of Bethshemesh was short-lived. **“And he smote the men of Bethshemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the Lord, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the Lord had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter”** (verse 19).

Question 5: *From verse 19 of our text, what can we learn from God’s dealing with people?*

The sin of the people of Bethshemesh is that they looked into the ark of God contrary to His original instructions and this led to the death of 50,070 people. God is impartial in

His dealing with people. Wherever sin is found, He deals with it, whether in the church or secular world. Therefore, no one should use religion as a cover for sin. Also, we are expected to stop at the revealed knowledge of God rather than seeking hidden knowledge from strange sources. Such actions lead to backsliding and serious problems. Instead of finding out the reason for the affliction, they were angry and sought for ways to get the ark out of their territory. They called on the inhabitant of Kirjathjearim to come and fetch the ark.

Question 6: *Mention another instance in the Bible where the ark was abandoned.*

David abandoned the ark in the house of Obededom because of the death of Uzzah (2 Samuel 6:6-11). Youths are not expected to turn their back on God in times of problems but seek Him for solution. Also, they should not be afraid to offer their services to Him or abandon their duty posts because of discipline meted out to erring officers or leaders.

LESSON 708

SYMBOLS OF LAW AND GRACE

MEMORY VERSE: “For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise” (Galatians 4:5).

TEXT: Galatians 4:12-31

In the Old Testament, people were used to animal sacrifices. These sacrifices and other ceremonial events were a pointer to what Christ came to do. The sacrifices offered were according to the law but could not save them from sins. ***“For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect”*** (Hebrews 10:1).

Christ came to redeem man from the curse of the law by providing the opportunity for true and complete freedom from sin. The law was given to create in man the consciousness of sin but did not give the power to overcome it. As long as man is without Christ, he lacks the ability to live above sin. During the time of the law, individuals had to pay for the animals used for the sacrifices. Thank God for the sacrifice of Christ that has provided the full and final atonement for all sins. This is free of charge by grace to be enjoyed through faith. The Bible says: **“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree”** (Galatians 3:13).

This study looks at the symbols of the law and grace as typified by the two children of Abraham. The Galatian church had a challenge understanding that we are no more confined to the traditions and rites of the Old Testament. Believers are not in bondage to fulfil the ceremonial laws,

but saved by the grace of God. **“So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free”** (verse 31).

PAUL’S CONCERN FOR THE BACKSLIDDEN CHRISTIANS: (Galatians 4:12–20; 2:21; 3:1–3; 1 Corinthians 11:1; Hebrews 10: 38,39)

Paul had spent years on his missionary journeys to Galatia preaching the gospel to them. The church had now become large and was expected to have matured. However, some of the proselytes infiltrated the church trying to enforce the teaching of Judaism on them. Proselytes are Gentiles who were converted to Judaism and were expected to go through the circumcision and other rites of the Jews. These proselytes came into the church and convinced some of them that they still needed to merge their experience of salvation through faith in Christ with the traditions of the Jews.

Paul tried to make the church understand that Christ is the only way we can be saved from sin; that **“...by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin... by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”** (Romans 3:20; Acts 13:39; Romans 5:1).

Question 2: *Why did some disciples disagree with Paul?*

The Galatian Christians believed in salvation by grace before the proselytes came into the church. The proselytes, like false disciples today, spoke about their convictions so passionately and were able to sway some disciples who were not firm in their convictions. Hence, Paul had to remind them of where they had fallen. ***“Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth”*** (verses 15,16). Paul did not want to lose any of these disciples; hence, his continuous plea with them to

consider that they had been misled and should return to the Lord.

Question 3: *How can we restore backsliders to the Lord?*

“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you” (verse 19). Backsliders are those who had once known the Lord but compromised, and decided to go astray. Due to their knowledge of the Bible, they are able to create defense for their actions. Like Paul did, we can use the following strategies to restore backsliders to the Lord. (1) Assure them of the purpose for seeking their restoration (verse 12). (2) Seek their commitment to the gospel truth (verse 13). (3) Remind them of past testimonies (verse 14). (4) Re-ignite the passion for Christ in them (verses 15,16). (5) Reveal the purpose and plan of the deceivers (verse 17).

PERIL OF CONTINUING IN BONDAGE THROUGH THE LAW (Galatians 4:22-25,29-31; Genesis 21:12-14; Romans 7:5; 8:1-4; 10:1-5,9-13)

Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, illustrates the differences between the law of Moses and the grace of God by using symbolic representations of Hagar and Sarah. The apostle listed the characteristics of Hagar. She was a slave even though she was initially treated specially (verses 21,22). She was given to Abraham by Sarah (verse 23). She had a son, Ishmael, for Abraham (verses 23 and 24). Ishmael persecuted Isaac, the son of promise and the rightful heir (verse 29). He was then sent away from the heir (verses 30,31). The difference in the two sons, one by Sarah (a freewoman) and the other by Hagar (a bondwoman) aptly illustrates salvation by grace through faith and observance of the law through personal efforts.

Question 4: *What are the dangers of trying to keep the law instead of seeking for grace that brings salvation?*

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). Christ is the Savior of the world. No one can be saved by trying to keep the laws. It is only through Him that one can receive salvation and escape eternal damnation in hell. **“Neither**

is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

This allegory also depicts the superiority of the New Covenant established on better promises above the Old Covenant.

PROMISES IN THE COVENANT FOR BELIEVERS THROUGH GRACE (Galatians 4:26-31; John 1:7; Romans 4:16; 5:20; 8:3; Hebrews 7:22-28; 12:24; 13:12)

Paul went on to apply this story to the blessedness of the believer’s union with Christ by grace through faith. Believers are likened to the children of promise as was Isaac. Isaac was the anointed heir of Abraham (verse 27,28). The conflict between Ishmael and Isaac is typical of that which exists between believers and the world. The world, through jealousy and envy, persecutes believers today.

However, God demonstrated His preference for the true heir as He commanded the son of the bondwoman to be cast out. There is always a plan of separation between the freeborn and the servants, the sheep and the goats, the righteous and the unrighteous (1 Peter 2:9,10). The privileges being enjoyed by the believers today as true heirs of God’s blessings come with some responsibilities. **“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation”** (1 Peter 2:9-12).

LESSON 709

MAINTAINING SPIRITUAL LIBERTY

MEMORY VERSE: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Galatians 5:1).

TEXT: Galatians 5:1-21

In the previous chapters, Paul the apostle by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit pointed out that believers should stand firm in Christ by faith. He made us understand that as many as are in Christ are free from sin and its entanglement. Therefore, being free, believers must be cautious of their freedom in Christ Jesus. This is the focus of today's teaching.

Question 1: *According to our text, what do you understand by spiritual liberty?*

Liberty is freedom from captivity or slavery. Spiritual liberty is the freedom from the captivity of sin and Satan. This is obtained through total repentance from sins and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We have everything we need in Christ. So, every Christian youth should guard what he has jealously and hold firmly to it till the end (Hebrews 3:6).

CAUTION OVER CEREMONIAL LAW (Galatians 5:1-12; 3:10,11,29; 6:15; Acts 15:1-12; 1 Corinthians 7:19; Romans 3:20-31; 4:7-16; 15:8; 16:17; Titus 3:10; 2 John 1:10,11)

Paul the apostle had earlier cautioned the Galatian believers to beware of false teachers who tried to bring them under the bondage of the law. He had shown how their teachings were contrary to that of the gospel. These false teachers proved that what Christ had done through His death was not enough for their salvation. Paul emphasized that a man is saved by faith in Christ and not by the observance of the law. Therefore, he gave an express command to believers to: “**Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and not to be again entangled with**

the yoke of bondage” (verse 1). We are empowered and brought into a state of liberty and freedom from the yoke of sin, ceremonial law and from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:10). Converted youths are no longer tied to the observance of the ceremonial laws. **“Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace”** (verses 2,4). Being tied to those ceremonial laws will make such a person lose his benefits of grace. Physical circumcision as a means of salvation is therefore contrary to the gospel because it has been abolished.

Christian youths should ignore people who teach that there are other means of salvation. The death, resurrection, blood and righteousness of Christ are more powerful, effective and sufficient to justify the penitent.

Those who seek to be justified by the law render the death of Christ of no effect. To persuade them to be steadfast in the doctrine and liberty of the gospel, Apostle Paul set before them his own example, and that of other Jews who had embraced Christ. **“For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith”** (verse 5). Nothing now avails in the sight of God but faith which is made active by love. Love to God produces obedience to His will. **“If ye love me, keep my commandments”** (John 14:15).

“Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (verses 7-9). Apostle Paul called their attention to their commendable beginning and rebuked them for their permissive behavior. The Christian life is a race and it is expected of a believer to run well to obtain a prize (1 Corinthians 9:24; Philippians 2:14-16; 1 Peter 4:3- 5). Christian youths should not give audience to anyone who comes to them with enticement to distract them from what they believe and their commitment. They should remember the event at the garden of Eden between the serpent and Eve (Genesis 3:1-8).

Question 2: How can we handle penetration of error in the church today?

Youth leaders are expected to be watchful over their flocks like the apostles to stamp out any trait of error or sin found in the church. **“I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be”** (verse 10). After Apostle Paul had tried to stop further spread of imposition of circumcision on the brethren, he also expressed the hope he had concerning them. **“And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased”** (verse 11). If Paul and other apostles had supported circumcision and the observance of the Law of Moses alongside faith in Christ as necessary for salvation, then the Jews would not have staged persecution against them. **“I would they were even cut off which trouble you”** (verse 12). Paul here had shown his desire that such persons holding on to and teaching circumcision should be disciplined. Youth leaders should not hesitate to discipline those who peddle error among the brethren.

COMMITMENT TO BROTHERLY LOVE (Galatians 5:13-15; John 13:35; Romans 13:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 Peter 1:22; 3:8,9; 4:8; 1 John 2:10; 3:16-19)

“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another” (verse 13). Believers in Christ have been called to liberty, total freedom from sin and as well as from the ceremonial law. Apostle Paul admonished us not to use our liberty to satisfy the flesh. Even though the gospel proclaims liberty from the ceremonial law, believers are to obey the moral law which is **“by love serve one another”**. **“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself”** (verse 14). Love is the sum of the whole law (Matthew 22:37-40). We are truly the disciples of Christ when we have love towards one another.

Question 3: Explain the term “love thy neighbor as thyself”.

“For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false

witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Romans 13:9). If you love your neighbors, you will not commit adultery or fornication with them; you will not kill them either with words or with swords; you will not steal their property; you will not bear false witness against them; and you will not covet their property. **“Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets”** (Matthew 7:12).

“But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another” (verse 15). Biting and devouring one another could happen when there is backsliding. Christ and His love would be missing in the lives and gathering of such people. That was the reason Paul gave this admonition to believers not to allow error. Entrance of such error will definitely corrupt true Christian life and relationship and eventually destroy fellowship.

COMMANDMENT TO WALK IN THE SPIRIT (Galatians 5:16-21; Romans 8:1,4,12-14,16; 13:14; Galatians 2:20; 1Corinthians 6:11; Philippians 3:7-9)

“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh” (verse 16). Apostle Paul redirected the Galatian believers from their carnal lifestyle. This was done by giving a charge that they should walk in the Spirit so as not to yield to the desire, lust and attraction of the flesh. Those who walk in the Spirit are free from condemnation, mind the things of heaven and live a righteous life.

“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law” (verses 17,18). This is the reason for charging them to walk in the Spirit. **“The flesh”** represents the corrupt and carnal part of our natural being. It struggles **“against the spirit”**. It opposes all the suggestions of the Spirit and resist everything that is spiritual. On the other hand, **“the spirit”** which is the renewed and transformed part of us, strive

“against the flesh”, opposes the will and desire of it. That is the reason we cannot do the things that we would. **“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me”** (Galatians 2:20). **“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God”** (Romans 8:14). Christian youths should therefore, examine themselves to know who is really in charge - the Spirit or the flesh. **“Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?”** (Romans 6:16).

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envying, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (verses 19-21). The apostle listed the works of the flesh which must be watched against and mortified¹ by living under the influence of the Spirit. These sins will shut the door of heaven against sinners and backsliders. **“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish”** (Luke 13:3). The righteous and holy God will never admit anyone practicing the works of the flesh into His presence. They must be washed, sanctified and justified in the name of our Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of God. **“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”** (1 Corinthians 6:11).

Question 5: *How can a sinning youth be free from the works of the flesh?*

“And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (1 Timothy 1:14,15). To be free, sinning youths

must first realize their sinfulness, repent and confess their sins, renounce every sinful relationship and accept Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. To overcome the works of the flesh after being saved, you need to read the Bible daily and rely on His directives and instructions regularly; and crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts and walk in the Spirit. You must also avoid the pursuits of vain, worldly glory including the desire to partake in beauty pageant, populist movements, street carnivals, sports fanaticism and worldly entertainments. These are the practical steps that help believers please the Lord. So, “... **walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh**” (verse 16).

LESSON 710

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

MEMORY VERSE: “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25).

TEXT: Galatians 5:22-26

Genuine experience of salvation produces an undeniable and visible transformation that is marked by a change of character. Such a life is controlled and guided by the Spirit of God. The fruit of such life is what is called “**the fruit of the Spirit**”.

Question 1: *Mention the components of the fruit of the Spirit.*

The Scripture gives a list of the components of the fruit of the Spirit, namely: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance. For a converted youth to exhibit such fruit is a proof that he is holy and qualified for heaven. Unfortunately, those who do not have the Spirit of God, to start with, do not belong to Him and cannot manifest these fruit (Romans 8:7-9).

THE DESCRIPTION OF A FRUITFUL LIFE (Galatians 5:22,23; 1 Corinthians 13:1-7; Ephesians 5:9; 2 Peter 1:4-8).

The life of a sinful youth also produces some kind of fruit while a converted youth produces another kind of fruit. The former lives in the flesh while the later produces the fruit of holiness. It is by these fruits that we differentiate between a sinning and a righteous youth. **“Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them”** (Mathew 7:16-20).

Question 2: *What are the fruits of the sinful life?*

A sinner indulges in theft, deception, immorality, examination malpractice, malice, occultism, anger, etc. (verses 19-21). But this is not the kind of fruit that God is looking for in a life that would be approved of Him. The Bible is clear about what type of life is acceptable to God. It is a life that brings forth the fruit of the Spirit.

Question 3: *Describe any four of the components of the fruit of the Spirit.*

Love is the first and center of the fruit of the Spirit. It is an act of goodwill towards the well-being and happiness of others. The capacity to love is enabled by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). Love is the enabling factor in obeying the laws of God (Romans 13:10; John 14:15).

Joy is another way the Spirit of God expresses His presence in someone's life (Romans 14:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:6). It is the inward excitement that a converted youth has despite all negative situations around him. It is expressed in service and hope of heaven.

Peace is the quietness that the Spirit of God grants the soul such that it is not bothered by the prevailing unfavorable circumstances.

Longsuffering is the ability to bear with the weakness and inadequacies of others. It is also a virtue of being able to endure unpleasant conditions that God allows to come believers' ways.

Gentleness is another component of the fruit of the Spirit. It is the soft and tender disposition to the actions of others even when injured.

Goodness is an act of benevolence, always putting ourselves in a position to benefit others without any string attached to it or seeking to get any benefit from them.

Faith or faithfulness, also known as fidelity is the next one. When the Spirit of God indwells a person, he lives a steadfast and upright life. He is trustworthy and faithful in all things.

Meekness is patience in the reception of injuries. It is neither meanness nor a surrender of our rights. It is the opposite of sudden anger, malice and long-harbored vengeance.

The last of all is **temperance**. This is self-control. It is the ability to hold oneself back from responding to hurts in a rude manner. It is also the ability to control your desires and passions. All these components are tied together by love.

The manifestation of this fruit of the Spirit is very essential to our fruitfulness in the service of God. As a matter of fact, they are also essential to peaceful co- existence in the society. Hence, no society can ever make a law “**against such**”.

THE DESTRUCTION OF FLESHLY LUST (Galatians 5:24; Romans 6:6,11-14; Colossians 3:1-5; 2 Timothy 2:22)

Fleshly lust is also referred to as the lust of the flesh, eyes or the pride of life. It is the unhealthy drive and desire to outshine others (1 John 2:16). Fleshly lust is not only very dangerous but also quite destructive. It has been the cause of the ruin of many visions and dreams of many youths.

Question 4: *What is fleshly lust?*

Lust is uncontrollable desire or inordinate affection. Fleshly lust is a product of the evil nature of man. The moment we become born again, it is expected that we become dead to all forms of fleshly affection and lusts. “**And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts**” (verse 24).

Question 5: *How can a Christian youth destroy fleshly lusts?*

When Christ was crucified, He could not (physically speaking) do all they were inviting Him to do. He was nailed to the cross. Sinners wagged their tongues at Him but He could do nothing about that. When we crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts, it means we are dead to them. We can no longer respond to them. Another way to see it is to imagine a dead man who is invited to steal, lie or

fight. Even if given many strokes, he neither feels the pain nor the compulsion to yield because he is dead. **“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry”** (Colossians 3:5). No part of our body must be engaged in any evil or employed by anyone to do evil.

To be able to do this successfully, there are some practical steps a Christian youth must take. One, read the word of God regularly. Two, pray without ceasing. Every opportunity to pray is an avenue to develop our spiritual muscles and renew our strength. Three, always be in the assembly of those that encourage and challenge you to be godly. Four, regularly meditate on decent things. When negative thoughts come, shun them. Apart from the usual reading of the Bible and prayer, have quality quiet time.

THE DEMAND FOR A GLORIOUS LIFE (Galatians 5:25,26; Romans 12:1,2; Ephesians 5:26,27)

“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (verse 25). The literal meaning of this statement is rendered if we claim to be spiritual. We are to walk by the Spirit of God. If we truly walk by the Spirit, there is no vain glorying. **“Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another”** (verse 26). Living a life without the stain of the flesh is a glorious and beautiful one. Christ’s demand on our life is: **“That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish”** (Ephesians 5:26,27).

Question 6: *What is God’s demand on a converted youth?*

The demand was made clear in the use of the words **“let us”**. It is our responsibility to make ourselves available for God to work in us. **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service”** (Romans 12:1). God’s command to

us is that we **“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 12:2)

Question 7: *What is the significance of measuring up to God’s standard?*

If we do not conform or measure up to the standard of God, we would be disappointed on the last day. Therefore, **“follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord”** (Hebrews 12:14). We should pray till we bear the fruit of the Spirit.

LESSON 711

BELIEVERS' DUTY TO THE FALLEN

MEMORY VERSE: “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2).

TEXT: Galatians 6:1-5

In the previous chapter, Apostle Paul took time to differentiate between the flesh and the Spirit; the manifestation of the flesh and the evidence of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:19-23). The proof that we belong to Christ is that we manifest the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:24). As we begin to live the spiritual life, Paul admonishes us to walk in the Spirit so as not to fulfil the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:25,16).

In this concluding chapter, Paul admonished the Galatian Christians concerning their responsibilities toward one another. Our responsibilities include restoring the backsliders, bearing one another’s burden and living a meek life to challenge others to live for Him. Brethren who are fallen need encouragement and support from those who are standing by His grace. However, both the spiritually weak and strong believers must be watchful and prayerful to overcome temptations. This will help against falling into sin.

Question 1: *What does it mean to be overtaken in a fault?*

To be overtaken in a fault means falling in to sin unintentionally. This happens when one is not having a thought of it beforehand. It is caused by lack of watchfulness.

RESTORATION OF FALLEN BELIEVERS (Galatians 6:1; 1 John 5:16; Matthew 26:41; 1Peter 5:8-9; James 5:19,20; Jude 20-25)

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (verse

1). To be overtaken in a fault simply implies being trapped by sin, or being suddenly overcome by temptation. This admonition negates the doctrine of eternal security being perpetrated by some false preachers in our society today.

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

The doctrine of eternal security is the false teaching of once saved, forever saved irrespective of whatever the Christian does after conversion. The teaching has led many Christian youths who were once fervent in the Lord to relapse into sin. They refused to heed the warning of Jesus which says: **“watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak”** (Matthew 26:41). Christians who do not keep on their guard against sin, self and Satan will be overtaken and brought into bondage. Christian youths therefore, must be vigilant in living a godly life, since Satan is seeking those he may devour. In our text, apostle Paul goes further to tell the Galatian that it is the responsibility of those who are spiritual (strong in the Lord) to watch over the weak. The phrase **“ye which are spiritual”** in this context describes those who are walking in the Spirit and bearing the fruit of the Spirit. It applies to every youth who loves the Lord and wants to please Him.

Question 3: Which of the following best describes a spiritual youth?

- a) *Being born and named in the Church.*
- b) *Number of years spent in the Church.*
- c) *Being an officer in the School or Youth Home Success Fellowship.*
- d) *Saved, sanctified, Spirit-filled and living a consistent Christian life.*

Paul admonished us to **“...restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted”**. The call here was not to watch over their sin or for their downfall to make jest of them but to bring them back to the faith. Restoration of backsliders is our duty as

Christian youths and workers. **“Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; 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 5:19,20). This is to be done with consideration and watchfulness knowing that anyone can fall if he fails to watch.

RELIEVING THE BRETHREN OF THEIR BURDENS:
(Galatians 6:2,5; Romans 12:10; 15:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 5:11,14; James 5:16; 1 Peter 4:8-10)

It is our responsibility as brethren in Christ to help one another in the faith. Hence, Apostle Paul told the Galatian Church that their duty toward one another was to **“Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ”** (verse 2).

Question 4: (a) What does it mean to bear one another’s burden? (b) How can this be practically demonstrated among youths?

To bear one another’s burden is to support one another. This can be done in several ways. One, by being patient with those who are still growing in faith to maturity. **“We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves”** (Romans 15:1). Two, by coming to one another’s aid in times of their needs. **“Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality”** (Romans 12:13). Three, by encouraging one another to be faithful to the Lord. **“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works”** (Hebrews 10:23,24). Four, by praying for one another. Five, by visiting those who are sick. Christian youths can practically bear one another’s burden by praying for the sick, sharing academic knowledge with others, giving a helping hand to others and sharing food and other materials with the needy. This may however be done with the permission of their parents. We need to fulfill the law of Christ. The law of Christ is to love one another and to bring one another into a common bond and Christian fellowship. It is faith working through love.

“For every man shall bear his own burden” (verse 5). This verse refers to individual’s responsibility toward God. There is a burden of responsibility each Christian must bear. Each Christian is accountable for himself before the Lord. **“So, then every one of us shall give account of himself to God”** (Romans 14:12; 1Corinthians 3:6-11).

REPROVING THE SELF-EXALTED BELIEVER (Galatians 6:3,4; Romans 12:3; Galatians 6:14; 2 Corinthians 13:5)

The religious people who thought they were righteous based on their observance of the law were reprovved by the apostle. **“For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another”** (verses 3,4). Legalism (a religion based on observance of the Law of Moses) promotes arrogance, self-deception and blocks the observer’s mind from the truth. **“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”** (John 8:32).

These were those who boasted themselves of the law and at the same time were breakers of it (Romans 2:23). Also, today, there are youths who boast themselves of many things in the church but are not born again. **“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name, have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity”** (Matthew 7:22,23).

Question 5: *Mention some things youths boast of in the church in place of their salvation.*

“But God forbid that I should glory (boast), save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Galatians 6:14). Many youths boast about their church membership, rendering service in the church, being born by Christian parents, regular attendance in the church, etc. All these are self-righteousness that will take no one to heaven. Hence, Apostle Paul challenged the Galatian Christians thus: **“But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another”**

(Galatians 6:4). There is need for every Christian youth to examine himself or herself daily. **“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).

In summary, believers must be on their watch because it is possible to fall. However, it is our duty to lift the fallen, support those who are weak and meet the needs of others. We are not to glory in anything except in the cross of Christ.

LESSON 712

THE LAW OF SOWING AND REAPING

MEMORY VERSE: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Galatians 6:7)

TEXT: Galatians 6:6-18

Apostle Paul had been working hard to correct the erroneous teachings of false teachers in the Galatian church. These teachers had negative impact on these believers through their teachings. They aimed at dissuading the church from the gospel into bondage. Also, their intention was to impose unnecessary legalism on the Galatian brethren. This they did with the motive of showing themselves righteous outwardly. **“As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ”** (verse 12). Being a Christian is more than just mere outward show. It is not by belonging to a given denomination, involvement in Christian activities or being born into a Christian home. Our profession of Christian faith must first begin in our heart; it will then outwardly affect the way we live and do things.

Question 1: *What was the aim of Apostle Paul for this epistle?*

Apostle Paul, in his concluding part of this epistle to the Galatian church expresses his desire for the brethren to be yielded and obedient to God’s command. He reminded them of the law of sowing and reaping. This law is a divine order of reaping whatever one sows. Knowing this, a believer should be careful of whatever he does. This same law necessitates the need to care, share, and help one another. Apostle Paul revealed also to the Galatians one of the principles that led to his success as a Christian minister – self crucifixion. He expressed his joy in the cross of Christ and commended those believers who kept to the rules of Christ. Believing youths and their leaders who want to be successful Christians in life and ministry should follow the apostle’s example.

COUNSEL TO BELIEVERS IN CHRIST (Galatians 6:6-10; Acts 20:20; Galatians 5:19-21; Psalm 126:5; Hosea 10:12,13)

“Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things” (verse 6). Apostle Paul gave all his life to teaching all the churches in the Gentile world the word of God. He declared at a time that, **“I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house”** (Acts 20:20). This is worthy of emulation by Christian youths, youth leaders and school and fellowship officers. Also, all teachers of the word of God are indebted to teach the people they are leading.

Question 2: *What should a Christian youth do after hearing God’s word?*

After being taught the word of God, Christian youths should devote time to pray for grace to be obedient. Prayer after hearing the word of God shields it from being stolen from our hearts by the devil. It also makes it to bear fruits (Mark 4:3-8). When necessary, they should get in touch with their teachers (leaders) for clarity on any biblical issues they do not understand. They should not feel shy to ask questions after the teaching of the Search the Scriptures.

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (verse 7). Apostle Paul warned the Galatians against deception by the devil or false teachers. He emphatically stated that **“whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap”**. Naturally, when someone sows any crop, he reaps the same. In other areas of life, it is whatever we invest that we reap.

Question 3: *In what practical areas can this law apply to the youths?*

A youth who is regular and punctual to school, attends lessons and studies hard will come out successful in examination. The reverse will go for an indolent student who misses school and lessons all the time. As it applies in the physical, so it is in the spiritual. When a sinner gives up his old life of sin through repentance, he reaps

a transformed righteous life. As he goes deeper through prayer and consecration, he becomes sanctified and is made holy. The more he strives to be like Christ through deeper consecration, he becomes conformable to the image of Christ. His affections are set on heavenly things. The wayward youth, who replaces his education with pleasure-seeking will doubtless reap pain in due time. This is the reason some boys and girls become premature fathers and mothers as they indulged in immorality. Negligence to heed the call to salvation leads to captivity in the hand of the devil.

Apostle Paul gave two analyses of how a person can sow. **“For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting”** (Galatians 6:8). Sowing in the flesh is to give oneself to fulfill the lusts of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Corinthians 6:9,10; Romans 1:29-31). The result of walking in the flesh is reaping corruption and damnation in hell (Zephaniah 1:14-17). The second is sowing in the Spirit. It means repentance from sin and living a holy life. This will lead to a peaceful and rewardable life on earth; and a blissful, joyful life in eternity. Such will inherit all things and will forever reign with Christ in His glory (Revelation 21:7; 22:5). Today, some brethren give reasons why they should not care and share with others. God knows the end from the beginning. He is aware that false brethren would be in the church to defraud others. But His command is: **“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not: As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith”** (verses 9,10). To stop to do good is to stop reaping the blessings that follow. Remember that every deed of kindness shown to someone in need will be rewarded by the Lord. **“For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink, because ye are Christ’s, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward”** (Mark 9:41).

CROSS-BEARING IN CHRIST (Galatians 6:11-15; Romans 12:1,2; John 18:17; Matthew 10:38; 16:24; Romans 8:35-39)

“Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand” (verse 11). Though Apostle Paul wrote a long letter to the Galatians, he did not lose focus. Looking at the letter written by him to all the churches, they were not incoherent¹. His write-up molded the life of the reader. It was written to establish the truth, lift up Jesus and correct errors propagated by false teachers. His letters were written also to address the problem of sin and the path to deliverance. It revealed the mysteries of God reserved for our generation, revelation about heaven and its glory and the rewards to be given to those who serve the Lord.

Question 4: *How can Christian youths use letters to affect the lives of others?*

Letter writing is one of the most effective ways of communication. The writer has the advantage of expressing himself without being under tension. Letters could be stored for future uses. Saved youths could make use of letter writing to preach to their sinning friends. Friends in remote places can be reached through letter writing. Writing can be done on social media, by text messages, and putting pen to paper. God frowns at any form of misuse of letter writing. Writing of immoral letter by a boy to a girl and vice versa is a sin against God. Immoral letters should not be written or read by any heaven-minded youth. Such cases should be reported to ones’ parents, teachers or leaders in the church.

“As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ” (verse 12). The Galatian believers wanted to follow, in part, the beliefs of the Jews and that of Christ. They knew that as they promoted circumcision, the Jewish leaders will not persecute them. But that was not total submission to Christ. The false teachers, in addition to avoiding persecution, also wanted to take glory through the lives of their followers, had they succeeded in confusing and winning them to their sides. This is mostly the characteristics of youths who are disobedient to God’s word. They always seek to force their opinion and evil influences on the obedient youths. Watch against them in your districts, success camps and

retreats. Do not copy their unruly behavior. As the false teachers denied the cross of Christ, Apostle Paul made it a delight to glory in it. He was submissive to the word of God unlike the false teachers (verse 13). He understood that part of his calling was to carry the cross daily and follow Christ. **“And he said unto all, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me”** (Luke 9:23). The cross signifies the suffering which believers in Christ sometimes experience as they walk with God. This includes persecution, affliction, destitution, separation, derision, and other forms of reproaches. These are the things the promoters of circumcision tried to avoid. Christian youths should know that they have crosses to carry as they follow Christ. No one should see it as a strange thing. It is part of the cross they must bear. They should remember that “no cross, no crown”. As apostle Paul gloried in the cross of Christ, they should do the same. **“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world”** (verse 14). Crucifixion to the world will lift new creatures in Christ above the dictates of men and the world. A new creature in Christ refuses to be attracted to worldly things (1 John 2:15-17), but sets his affections on things above.

CONSEQUENCES OF BELIEVERS WALK IN CHRIST: (Galatians 6:16-18; Philipians 3:16; Psalm 119:105; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 2 Timothy 4:18; John 14:1,2; Matthew 19:28,29)

“And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God” (verse 16).

Question 5: *What is the outcome of walking according to the word of God?*

It is rewardable to walk according to divine rules. Some immediate outcome of walking with God are inward peace and favor from Him. There is also freedom from demonic oppression and captivity. As we walk with God, we will receive grace to be like Him through sanctification and be fit to dwell with Him eternally. **“By faith Enoch was**

translated that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God translated him: for he hath had witness borne to him that before his translation he had been well-pleasing unto God” (Hebrews 11:5). Walking according to the word of God guarantees His abiding presence. **“The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen”** (2 Timothy 4:18).

As Paul rounded off his message to the Galatians, he gave a charge: **“Henceforth, let no man trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus”** (verse 17).

Question 6: What is the importance of Paul’s charge to contemporary believers?

Apostle Paul referred to pains and afflictions that he had received because of his stand for Jesus Christ as marks of Him. **“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”** (2 Timothy 3:12). He concluded: **“Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen”** (verse 18). Paul’s pattern of writing always ends with prayer. This indicates that when we have preached the word or written to sinners, we should not cease to commit them to the grace of God. We should also pray for other believers in Christ to receive the grace of God. It is this grace that enables us to keep the faith and overcome all contending forces and power against our faith.

LESSON 713

CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE DURING PERSECUTION

MEMORY VERSE: “And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Matthew 10:22)

TEXT: James 5:1-20; 1 Peter 4:12-19

The moment a sinner turns to God in repentance and faith in Christ, “...**he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new**” (2 Corinthians 5:17). He begins to live a life different from what he was living before his decision to follow Christ (Acts 9:20,21). The people he had been working and walking with at school or in the neighborhood begin to resent and oppose his present life and convictions because it is opposed to theirs (1 Peter 4:3,4). This type of life, no doubt, would lead to suffering in different ways: scourging, ridicules, denial of right or even death (Matthew 10:17,18,21). This is what is called persecution.

Question 1: *What leads to the persecution of Christian youths?*

“Yea, all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). The new life of Christian youths attract persecution. Persecution is part of the Christian life. That was why Paul and Barnabas encouraged the Christians who were being persecuted. “**Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God**” (Acts 14:22). Thus, it becomes very important today for the Church to encourage Christian youths to endure in times of persecution. “**And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved**” (Matthew 10:22). Our text is very clear about the ungodly lifestyles of the persecutors. It also tells us the kind of life expected of a Christian in the time of persecution,

besides the fact that he must continue praying, believing and fellowshiping with other saints during persecution.

CHRISTLESS CONDUCT OF THE PERSECUTORS:

(James 5:1-6; 1 Peter 4:12-19; Matthew 5:10,11; 10:17-22; John 15:18,19; Acts 5:40; 7:54, 57-59; 8:3; 26:9-11)

“Go to now.” This statement means “Come now”. It was an appeal to arrest the attention of the oppressors. It was to call their attention to see how the people they oppressed felt. Usually, those who persecute others are insensitive to the pains of those they persecute. They delight in doing so because they believe they are doing what is right. This is because of their spiritual ignorance. **“They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me”** (John 16:2,3).

Question 2: *Mention other characteristics of persecutors.*

James said, **“Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth** (James 5:4). Persecutors may deny Christians of their basic rights. It could be parents who may stop paying the child’s school fees or stop buying things that are legitimate for the child. It could be the head of department sitting on the opportunity for scholarship. Besides, he says, **“Ye have condemned and killed the just...”** (verse 6). The persecutors will falsely accuse Christians so that they would suffer unjustly (i.e. to suffer for what they did not do). Sometimes, like the case of the apostles, they kill the saints. **“As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter”** (Romans 8:36; Psalm 44:22).

Furthermore, the persecutors revile and ridicule the Christians. They make uncharitable comments about their good deeds. If it is in their power, they will beat the Christian youth. The ridicule could be made public or before the extended family. They manifest a very strong

hatred that can destroy the family tie so that **“the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child...”**. A kind of hatred that will spread to the extent that **“ye shall be hated of all men”**. Also, the persecutors make all efforts to intimidate the Christian youth not to preach the gospel. **“And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go”** (Acts 5:40). Even when a Christian youth picks up the courage to preach to them, they are violently resistant and would stop their ears from hearing the truth (Acts 7:54,57-59). The persecutors of the Christians can use their privilege of authority to punish them even when they have done nothing wrong. They try to force them to deny the Lord and blaspheme His holy name. God expects that in all these, we should display a true Christian character of patience and meekness.

CHRISTIAN CONDUCT DURING PERSECUTION:
(James 5:7-12; 1 Peter 4:12-19; Matthew 10:16-23; 5:10-12; Romans 5:3-2:12; 1 Peter 3:14-18; 4:12-16)

“Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you” (James 5:6). To condemn and kill the just implies making them suffer even to the point of death. The Christians in our text who suffered such persecution did **“not resist”**. What a demonstration of total meekness and patience in persecution!

Question 3: *What lessons can we learn from the attitude of these Christians in our text?*

From these, we learn to be meek and quiet during persecution. **“But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak”** (Matthew 10:19). We should not premeditate or rehearse how to fight back in words or actions. If necessary, the Lord will tell us what we should say. Our Lord Jesus Christ has shown us the example. Despite all the false accusations raised against Him, He answered none (Matthew 26:59- 63; 27:11-14). The Scripture says, **“He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth”** (Acts 8:32).

Question 4: *Mention other Christian conducts expected of a Christian youth during persecution.*

“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receives the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (James 5:7). The word of God encourages us to be patient in tribulation. Like a farmer that waits for **“the precious fruit”**, a Christian must have **“long patience”**. This means that the persecution may last for some time. It is only God that determines the length of time and the quality of what Christians go through (1 Corinthians 10:13). Hence, we must endure, **“for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh”**. James gave examples of **“the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience”**. Those who endured were always happy at the end of the afflictions. Joseph, David and Job were in this category. The pity and tender mercy of God preserved them.

“Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned...” (James 5:9). Some Christians blame church leaders for their miseries during persecutions. Some blame their friends who preached to them, counting that they would not have been suffering if they had not yielded to the gospel. The word of God says we should not grudge. That would lead to condemnation. Rather, we are to rejoice and glorify God (1 Peter 4:16).

Finally, **“But above all things, my brethren, swear not ... but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation”** (James 5:12). A Christian should maintain an honest and straightforward conversation in times of persecution. He should not attempt to cover anything up by swearing, probably, in order to escape suffering (1 Peter 2:12).

CHRISTIAN CONTINUITY DURING PERSECUTION:
(James 5:13-20; 1 Peter 4:12-19; Daniel 6:10; Acts 14:22; 2 Timothy 3:12-14)

“Is any among you afflicted? let him pray” (verse 13). Against the tendency that many give in to self-pity during persecution, apostle Paul encourages us to pray. We should not allow the persecution to destroy our prayer life. **“Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime”** (Daniel 6:10). Daniel maintained his normal devotion to God even when he had persecutors all around him. Persecution should not stop us from doing our quiet time. It is the time to say the **“the prayer of faith”** unto God. Prayer will give us supernatural strength.

Question 5: Mention how Christians can continue with the Lord during persecution.

“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16). We should not keep away from other believers during persecution. It is a time to be closer to other Christians who can share their own experiences to encourage us. All our past faults and negative ways in which we have handled persecution in the past should be confessed. In short, it should be a time of fellowship with people of like precious faith (Acts 4:23-33). We should not be like others who run away from the fellowship of God’s people because of persecution (Hebrews 10:25).

“Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him” (James 5:19). Persecution has led some youths out of the faith. They became cold and drew back completely. Therefore, we are to be close to those who are persecuted, and bring them back to the Lord (James 5:20). It is the will of God for us to minister to those who have fallen because of persecution. **“Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God”** (Acts 14:22).

LESSON 714

VICTORY OVER TEMPTATION

MEMORY VERSE: “My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not” (Proverbs 1:10).

TEXT: Luke 4:1-12; James 1:12-16; Jeremiah 35:1-10

Salvation experience marks a turning point in the life of a Christian youth. Consequently, such a youth turns away from sin, Satan and the world. As he rejoices in his new-found faith, he makes consecration to live the righteous life with heaven in his mind. The devil, knowing that he has lost such an individual from the domain of sin, enslavement¹, oppression and destruction, makes frantic efforts to bring him back. The means employed by the devil to accomplish this is called temptation.

Question 1: *What is temptation?*

Temptation is an enticement in form of thoughts or suggestions to sin or do evil. Temptation is common to all, and saints of past ages also experienced it. Bible characters like Jesus, the Rechabites, Peter, King David, Daniel and his three friends, Joseph, etc., experienced temptations. Contemporary Christian youths are not exempted. They daily experience temptations. Temptation cuts across age, race, social class, color, and all spiritual levels. No saint lives or grows enough in grace or faith to be above temptation. Satan places stumbling blocks (temptations) on the pathways of Christians. He often engaged unfaithful disciples in putting obstacles on the way of Christians with the intention of making them to fall. There are temptations peculiar to youths, the middle-aged and aged ones. However, temptations continue throughout the lifetime of man generally. Satan's tactics are determined by his aim. The focus and emphasis of the believer should be to have an uncompromising stand against temptation. **“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him”** (James 1:12). From the text above, temptation also means trials. Paul the apostle

touched about temptation. Through his writing, it is made clear that though God allows temptation, He does not allow us to be tempted above what we can overcome (1 Corinthians 10:13). The aim of this subject is to reveal to Christian youths the sources of temptations, steps to overcoming them, and strong admonition not to yield to temptation.

SOURCES OF TEMPTATION (Luke 4:1,2; James 1:14; Matthew 4:1; 1 Chronicles 21:1; Genesis 3:6; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 Corinthians 2:11)

“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed” (James 1:13,14).

Question 2: *What are the sources of temptation?*

God is never the author of temptation to sin. He can never be blamed for sin, though, men in their attempt not to take responsibility for their actions, often heap blame of their failure on God. The Bible affirms that, **“God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man”** (James 1:13).

The apostle James, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, states that temptation begins with man’s desire, which may be perfectly legitimate by itself, but leads him away from his God-appointed goal. The desire within the heart, if allowed, can cause men to be enticed or tempted. Indeed, the devil tempts one with what he craves for. The devil, therefore, tries to entice the heart to desire things that would lead one astray. He makes youths to backslide first by creating pride, lust, revenge, envy, etc. within the heart. No wonder the Bible says: **“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life”** (Proverbs 4:23).

Temptation comes when one **“is drawn away of his own lust...”** Satan, however, does the drawing away. He sees the tendency to sin in the heart and entices one into sin. His goal is to dispossess us of our most valuable possession -

eternal life. The flesh is another source of temptation. The inordinate cravings of the flesh in the areas of appetite and immoral urge can lead to temptation. However, Satan uses various agents to bring temptation.

For example, he can use our neighbors, relatives or even parents as sources of temptation. A neighbor can impress some unscriptural idea, practice or sentiment on our mind and evoke the base nature in us. Relatives can craftily edge us out of the counsel of God and set our feet on the path of sin. Parents can lead us into wrong marriages, get us into unscriptural or even sinful work environment. Overconfidence can also be another source of temptation. Youths are, therefore, encouraged to diligently guard or protect their hearts and avoid anything that would be an object of temptation.

STEPS TO VICTORY IN TEMPTATION (Luke 4:3-12; Matthew 4:3-10; Genesis 39:7-13; Jeremiah 35:14-16; Daniel 3:12-18; 6:12-16)

Whatever form or shape a temptation takes, the joy of heaven is to see a believer overcome it. If victory is the goal of all Christian youths, then they must take a righteous and unshakeable stand against sin. In doing this, God's command is, "**Abstain from all appearance of evil**" (1 Thessalonians 5:22). Saints in the Scripture who overcame temptation were those who were resolute in their minds. The first step to overcoming temptation begins with a purposeful heart. "**Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank...**". This accounts for Daniel's ability to overcome all the temptations that he experienced in Babylon. The second is having the fear of God. Joseph manifested this while in Potiphar's house in Egypt. This was portrayed in his confession before Potiphar's wife, "**how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?**" (Genesis 39:9). The next is to have a strong determination to obey God's command no matter the source of the temptation. The Rechabites displayed this in Jeremiah 35:14-16.

Another step is to have a fixed mind to do God's will. Jesus Christ is our perfect Example. He knew God's will always

and had a fixed mind to do such. **“But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men”** (Mark 8:33). Furthermore, a strong desire to flow along in God’s plan will aid us to resist temptation from Satan. Christ rejected all the earthly offers Satan presented before Him in our text to fit into God’s plan for Him. Finally, a sound knowledge and conviction in the word of God. Jesus Christ often quoted from the Scriptures to rebuff the tempter.

Question 3: *How can a Christian youth overcome temptation?*

Some Christians always enjoy victory in times of temptations. Others struggle with it. To some, victory over temptation is as natural as breathing; while to others, it is far-fetched. In summary, a Christian pilgrim on his way to heaven will have victory over every temptation as he rejects evil (Proverbs 1:10-15); lives righteously (Proverbs 4:20-27; Isaiah 33:14-17 Titus 2:11,12); obeys God (Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 27:10; Acts 5:29), lives by faith (Hebrews 10:38), endures in times of temptation (James 1:12) and depends on divine help during temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13).

STRONG ADMONITION NOT TO YIELD TO TEMPTATION:
(James 1:12-15; Proverbs 1:10-15; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 2:18)

“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:13- 15). The gains from yielding to temptation are not comparable to doing otherwise. In other words, it is more rewardable not to yield to temptation.

Question 4: *From the revelation of God through apostle James, what are the processes of temptation?*

Temptation starts with a lust for evil in one’s heart. At

this stage, the tempted is weighing the supposed gain, pleasures to be derived from yielding. This leads to enticement to do the act and to conceive or accept to do it. Yielding to such temptation becomes sin. The danger is that it brings death at last. On earth, it brings pains, dejections, frustrations, regrets and sorrows. On the long run, it leads to death – separation from the kingdom of God.

Question 5: What is God's expectation from those who are tempted?

Do you know that you can overcome temptations if you choose to? God never allows temptation that you cannot overcome to come your way. **“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”** (1 Corinthians 10:13). Therefore, it is disappointing to yield to the temptation which God knows you could overcome. When next you are tempted, know that God allows it because He knows you can overcome it. Resolve, therefore, to allow God to be glorified by not yielding. The Lord will give you grace in Jesus name. **“My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not”** (Proverbs 1:10).

LESSON 715

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

MEMORY VERSE: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live” (John 5:25).

TEXT: *Daniel 12:2,3; John 5:28,29; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-16*

The resurrection of the dead is one of the studies of last days’ events called eschatology. The resurrection of the dead teaches that all who die in this world will undergo physical resurrection before the Great White Throne Judgment. This doctrine shows that there will be a resurrection of the body. That is, joining of the body with the soul to meet the Lord either in peace and joy, or meet Him in condemnation, eternal punishment and torment of hell. **“And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever”** (Daniel 12:2,3).

FACTS OF THE RESURRECTION (John 5:25,28,29; Daniel 12:2; Matthew 28:1-10)

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live” (John 5:25).

Question 1: State the scriptural facts that there will be resurrection.

The facts of the resurrection of the just and unjust rings through the teachings of Jesus Christ (John 6:40; 11:25; Matthew 16:21; 22:23-32). Job spoke of his eyes and flesh seeing God after worms have destroyed his body (Job 19:25-27). Isaiah spoke of the earth casting out the dead (Isaiah 26:14,19). Daniel spoke of the awakening of many

that sleep in the dust, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt (Daniel 12:2). In like manner spoke David (Psalm 16:10; 17:15). Old Testament saints (Hebrews 11:35), New Testament saints (Matthew 28:1-20; Mark 16:1-18; Luke 24:1-49; John 20:19-21) including Paul (Acts 17:18,32), Peter (1 Peter 1:3; 3:21), even Herod the wicked King and the generality of the people of his day believed in the resurrection of the dead (Mark 6:14-16).

FORMS OF THE RESURRECTION (1 Corinthians 15:39-54)

There are two major forms of resurrection. The resurrection of the just and the unjust. The resurrection associated with the just is exemplified by the glorified body that Jesus, the first fruit, had after His resurrection (Luke 24:36-43; John 20:11-20,24-31; 1 John 3:2). All resurrected bodies will be immortal (Daniel 12:2; Mark 9:42-48). The resurrected bodies of saints will possess different degrees of glory. **“There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also, is the resurrection of the dead”** (1 Corinthians 15:39-54).

In the intervening period between death (when the body and soul are separated) and the resurrection, one may ask: Where is the soul? The soul of a saint goes immediately to meet God in heaven. The repentant malefactor on the cross received forgiveness and assurance of Jesus: **“Today shall thou be with me in paradise”** (Luke 23:39-43). Righteous Lazarus died and was **“carried by angels into Abraham’s bosom”** where he was comforted (Luke 16:19-31). Stephen at death said, **“I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God,”** ready to receive him (Acts 7:54-60). Paul was **“willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord”** (2 Corinthians 5:1-8). Many other references of the Scripture confirm that the soul of the saint rejoices in God’s presence at death (Philippians 1:21-23; Ecclesiastes 12:1,7). On the other hand, when a sinner dies, his soul goes immediately to hell. In hell, he is conscious; he can see, feel and hear (Luke 16:19-31).

The timing for the resurrection to life of the just and resurrection to judgment of the unjust is well spelt out in the Scriptures in accordance with the ordained program of God. The resurrection of the saints of God is also variously described in the Scriptures as resurrection of life (John 5:28,29), resurrection of the just (Luke 14:13,14), a better resurrection (Hebrews 11:35) and the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4-6).

Question 2: *What are the phases of the first resurrection?*

There are four phases of the first resurrection: (a) The resurrection of Christ, the first fruit (1 Corinthians 15:3,4,12,20,23); (b) The resurrection of the Church-age saints at the rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-16); (c) The resurrection of the tribulation period saints (Revelation 20:3-5); and (d) The resurrection of Old Testament saints at the second advent of Christ to the earth (Daniel 12:2; Isaiah 26:19).

All the saints of God that ever died would resurrect in the first resurrection. Not a soul will be left behind. What joy! What triumph!! **“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years”** (Revelation 20:6).

The second resurrection is still part of God’s program but deals with the unsaved dead. There is a difference in time of one thousand years between the first and the second resurrection (Revelation 20:5-15). The second resurrection is also described as the resurrection to damnation (John 5:29). There will be everlasting punishment and torment in the lake of fire for all who partake in the second resurrection who have missed the first resurrection and whose names are not found in the Book of Life (Daniel 12:2; Revelation 20:11-15).

As in the early church when Hymenaeus and Philetus erred concerning the truth by teaching that the resurrection was past already, thereby making a shipwreck of their faith and that of all those who followed their false doctrine, there are

many false teachers today who “**know not the scriptures nor the power of God**” and overthrow the faith of many (2 Timothy 2:17,18; Matthew 22:23-32). Today, many false teachings on the resurrection of the dead abound having the same devastating effect on all who believe them. Among such doctrines are (a) Annihilation and (b) Purgatory.

The doubt, unbelief and scoffing of sinners will not prevent the complete resurrection program of God for both the saved and unsaved, the same way it did not alter the resurrection from the dead of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ (Acts 23:8; 2 Timothy 2:15-18; 1 Corinthians 15:12-23; Romans 3:3,4). The resurrection of Christ and the future resurrection of the saints form the foundation of our Christian faith (1 Corinthians 15:16-20). **“For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. BUT NOW IS CHRIST RISEN FROM THE DEAD!”**

FORGIVENESS THROUGH THE REDEEMER: (1 Thessalonians 4:13-16; John 1:29; Luke 1:74,75; 1 John 1:7; Ephesians 2:1,2,4-8; 2 Corinthians 5:17-19; Hebrews 12:14)

To partake in the first resurrection, the resurrection of the saved, there must of necessity, first be a spiritual resurrection in the present life. The spirit is quickened from death in trespasses and sins. The whole being renewed in the glorious likeness of God to a life of righteousness and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. Have you counted the cost if your soul should be lost forever?

There's a line that is drawn by rejecting our Lord,
Where the call of His Spirit is lost,...
And you hurry along with the pleasure-mad throng -
Have you counted, have you counted the cost?

Have you counted the cost, if your soul should be lost,
Tho' you gain the whole world for your own? ...
Even now it may be that the line you have crossed,
Have you counted, have you counted the cost?

LESSON 716

ISRAEL'S VICTORY OVER THE PHILISTINES

MEMORY VERSE: “So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel” (1 Samuel 7:13).

TEXT: 1 Samuel 7:1-17

In the previous chapter, the Philistines sent the ark of the Covenant out of their territory after it has made great devastation in their land. **“And the ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months. And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, what shall we do to the ark of the LORD? tell us wherewith we shall send it to his place”** (1 Samuel 6:1,2). After consultation, the ark was sent back to Israel with offerings and it was received at Bethshemesh (1 Samuel 6:15). The Bethshemites presumptuously looked into it and fifty thousand and seventy men died for their transgression. **“And he smote the men of Bethshemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the LORD had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter”** (1 Samuel 6:19).

Messengers were then sent to Kirjathjearim to fetch up the ark. **“And the men of Kirjathjearim came, and fetched up the ark of the LORD, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD”** (1 Samuel 7:1). This led to the return of the ark into Israel after the Philistines captured it.

THE REPENTANCE OF ISRAEL (1 Samuel 7:1-6; Jeremiah 18:7,8; Isaiah 12:3; Acts 3:19; 1 Thessalonians 1:9)

After many years of suffering and oppression in the hands of the Philistines, Israel lamented unto the Lord. **“And it**

came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjathjearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD” (1 Samuel 7:2). The nation cried to the Lord in repentance. God is ever attentive to the cries of penitent sinners.

Question 1: *What is repentance?*

Israel had openly violated the first commandment given to her at Mount Sinai. **“I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me”** (Exodus 20:2,3). They have hitherto served other gods; but, **“Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only”** (1 Samuel 7:4). Repentance is a complete turning away from sin, self and Satan to serve the living and true God. The repentance of Israel at this time was total. It was after this that Samuel gathered them together to seek the face of the Lord in prayer and fasting (verses 5,6).

Only true repentance is acceptable before God. Self-righteousness, giving of alms to the poor, paying tithes and offerings, being actively involved in church activities and programs, singing in the choir, regular church attendance, doing the best one can are not sufficient for one’s salvation and mercy from God. Self-appraisal like **“the Pharisee [who] stood and prayed thus with himself, [saying] I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess”** cannot save one (Luke 18:11,12).

Question 2: *What then must sinners and backsliders do to be accepted by the Lord as seen in our text?*

“And they gathered to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, we have sinned against the LORD ...” (1 Samuel 7:6). The children of Israel acknowledged their sins and confessed them to the Lord. They did not excuse their evils but confessed openly that they had sinned against Him.

In the same way, sinning and backsliding youths should not hesitate to repent from their sins. They need to acknowledge, confess and forsake them. Thereafter, they

should continue in their walk with Christ and submit to His Lordship.

THE DEFEAT OF THE PHILISTINES (1 Samuel 7:7-13; 17:50-54; 1 Samuel 2:10; Joshua 10:10)

“And the children of Israel said to Samuel, cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines” (1 Samuel 7:8). After true repentance, Israel had confidence to approach Samuel to intercede on their behalf for deliverance and victory over their age-long enemy. Repentance opens up the door for all-round victory and gives a believer confidence to approach the throne of grace when life’s challenges come.

Question 3: *What are some life challenges confronting Christian youths today?*

“Man, that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble” (Job 14:1). Challenges of life are common to all. Failure in examinations, poverty, financial problems, bereavements, temptations, persecutions are part of challenges youths face today. When we call upon the Lord like Samuel, He will deliver us. **“And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the Lord heard him. And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel”** (1 Samuel 7:9,10). As Samuel was offering the burnt offering to the Lord, the host of the Philistine mobilized themselves for battle. It seemed Israel’s case was hopeless; therefore, they were afraid. However, as they drew near, the Lord intervened and they were destroyed before Israelites.

Question 4: *What should a Christian youth do when faced with attack from the enemy?*

“When the wicked, even my enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he

shall set me up upon a rock” (Psalm 27:2,5). Christian youths need not fear but cry to the Lord and wait on Him for intervention. Faith in God will bring the needed victory. Israel conquered their enemies as the Lord intervened from above. **“So, the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel; and the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel”** (1 Samuel 7:13).

THE RECOVERY OF LOST POSSESSIONS (1 Samuel 7: 14-17; 30:8,18,19; 2 Samuel 8:3; 2 Kings 13:25)

“And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even unto Gath; and the coasts thereof did Israel deliver out of the hands of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites” (1 Samuel 7:14). Israel recovered their lost possessions only after they returned to the Lord. Backslidden youths will continue to be in deprivation of rights and under the oppression of their enemies until they return to the Lord like Israel.

Question 5: What must believing youths do to recover their lost virtues, glory, position and possessions in the kingdom?

For believers to recover their losses, they must recognize their kingdom rights and pray to God to reclaim them. **“And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you. And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed”** (Joel 2:25,26). **“And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places”** (1 Samuel 7:15,16). After Israel returned to the Lord, they remained under the protection of God under the leadership of Samuel, the approved prophet and priest to them. Christian youths must remain in the Lord and in the church of the living God to keep their victory.

LESSON 717

ISRAEL ASKS FOR A KING

MEMORY VERSE: “And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations” (1 Samuel 8:5).

TEXT: 1 Samuel 8:1-22

In the previous chapter, the children of Israel had been in a backslidden state for about twenty years. During this period, they were oppressed by their enemies who had kings. But through the ministry and prayer of prophet Samuel, they were restored into fellowship with God. The Philistines that rose against them were discomfited by God. **“So, the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel”** (1 Samuel 7:13). Hence, Samuel judged the people from city to city till he became too old to move around.

Question 1: *What is the danger of forgetting God's past wonders?*

It was unfortunate that the same Israelites, whom the Lord fought for, demanded for a king to rule over them and go to battles before them **“like all the nations”**. They attributed the success of those nations in battle to their military commanders. They forgot their Rock that fought for them and gave them victory over those nations that had kings (Numbers 31:8; Joshua 10:5,16). The danger of forgetting God's past wonders is that one will lose his confidence in Him.

THE HABITS THAT DISQUALIFY FROM GOD'S SERVICE: (1 Samuel 8:1-5; 2:22-24,34,35; Psalm 50:16-21; Proverbs 6:16-19; 1 Timothy 6:9-11)

“And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. Now the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: they were judges in Beersheba” (verses 1,2).

While it is important to note that it was not right for the children of Israel to ask for a king like other nations, it is also good to see a fundamental problem that led to that. Samuel had judged Israel for many years but he did not train anyone for the prophetic ministry. If he did, he would have looked into their lives, correct, mentor and discipline them where necessary as Elijah mentored Elisha and as Elisha disciplined Gehazi (1 Kings 19:15,16; 2 Kings 2:1-15; 5:20- 27). Then, he would have known if his sons were fit for the ministry. But all he did was to make them judges over Israel.

Question 2: What lessons can we learn from Samuel's appointment of his sons as judges over Israel?

Youth leaders should embark on training young ministers from their tender age. They should not wait for a vacant position to be filled before training them. They should enlist and identify prospective youth leaders from the youth fellowship. They should consider the affairs of their lives as they grow up. Things that ought to be corrected in their lives should be corrected. The leaders should not just think of their (youths) availability at the time they are needed but their spiritual qualities. If people who are available for a post are not capable, they should be taken through a training process. In the case of Samuel's sons, not only did they not know how to go about the ministry, their lives did not measure up to the standard of a minister.

Question 3: What are the habits that could disqualify youths from God's service?

“And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment” (verse 3). Samuel's sons did many things that disqualified them. Likewise, these same things disqualify people today. In their case, they were covetous and greedy. They were not fair and truthful in judgment. The Scripture also lists some things that disqualifies one from the service of God. They are: immorality, theft, wickedness, tale- bearing, anger and many others. The elders rejected Samuel's sons on the basis that they walked not in his ways. **“Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, and said unto him, Behold, thou**

art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations” (verses 4,5). Ungodly attitude in leaders will lead to contempt of the ministry (1 Samuel 2:17). God’s ministers must be holy, contented and moderate in their lifestyle (1 Timothy 6:6; 2 Timothy 2:19-21).

THE DISPOSITION REQUIRED OF GOD’S SERVANTS:
(1 Samuel 8:6-9,19-22; 1 Timothy 3:1-10; 2 Timothy 2:24)

When the people complained to Samuel about the behavior of his sons and the demand for a king, his disposition to it is worthy of emulation although he was displeased by their request. **“But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD”** (verse 6). He did not take it personal, rather, he listened to them and reported back to God. He was disciplined. He did not allow his feelings to interfere with their request. He still calmly gave them the word of God. **“And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king”** (verse 10).

Question 4: *What lessons can we learn from the attitude of Samuel during rejection?*

“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” (1 Samuel 8:7). It is important to learn how to handle rejection. When people refuse to follow instructions given to them from the Lord, it should not be taken personal or take the place of God. Should there be any complaint, the complainer should be given attention and the matter should be reported to God in prayers. God’s ministers should not attempt to force people into submission.

The Scripture is filled with instructions on the disposition and lifestyle of a minister. He should not be a brawler¹ or an argumentative person; he should not be quarrelsome. **“And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient”** (2 Timothy 2:24). Every minister doing God’s service should note that whatever people do to him is done to God. With that

understanding, it is wise to allow God to take over in times of conflicts and rejections rather than his emotion. God responded to Samuel's prayer. He told him exactly how to handle the situation. We may just say that He intervened. Ministers who allow God to handle their ministerial crises will always have His support. When Moses was confronted by Miriam, Aaron, Korah, Dathan and Abiram, he did not take any personal defense but allowed God to defend him (Numbers 12:1-10; 16:1-5). Similarly, when Christian youths get into rejection, instead of fighting, they should pray for God's intervention. On the second occasion, when **"the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel... Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD..."** (verses 19-22).

THE DESCRIPTION OF A HUMANLY APPOINTED KING: (1 Samuel 8:10-18; 16:7; Deuteronomy 17:14-20)

It is noteworthy that the Israelites asked for a king, but they were not the one who selected or appointed him. **"And Samuel said to all the people, see ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king"** (1 Samuel 10:24).

However, God foretold how the king will use their resources for himself. **"And he said, this will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots"** (1 Samuel 8:11). The children of Israel thought they had grown to have a strong person to be their king. They must have looked around for men of great statures. God does not think or work that way. Their assessment of a king led to God appointing for them someone that suits their request. They had put God in a situation to give them a king permissively. God's appointment now was their choice. They forced their own way on Him and the result was disastrous. When we force our desires on God, though He gives us our request, it could be injurious to our overall wellbeing. Therefore, we should be careful in our desires and demands from God.

LESSON 718

SAUL SEEKS LOST ASSES

MEMORY VERSE: “And the asses of Kish Saul’s father were lost. And Kish said to Saul his son, take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses” (1 Samuel 9:3).

TEXT: 1 Samuel 9:1-27

In the last chapter, the children of Israel demanded for a king. They made their desire known to Samuel, whose children did not walk in the way of the Lord. God and Samuel were displeased with their demand. However, Samuel left the issue of getting a king for Israel solely into the hand of the all-knowing God. This teaches us that when we want to take or make important decision, we should always commit it to God in prayer and allow Him to guide us. In response to their demand, God gave them a king from the tribe of Benjamin. **“Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power”** (verse 1). God revealed the king to Samuel and used the incidence of the lost asses to meet him.

Question 1: *Mention ways in which God use our life experiences to reveal or prepare us for His will.*

“And the asses of Kish Saul’s father were lost. And Kish said to Saul his son, take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses” (verse 3). There were cases in the Bible in which God used certain situations to bring to pass His divine purpose in the lives of His children. In our study today, God used the incidence of the lost asses, which Saul went in search of, to link him with Samuel. He was later appointed by God and anointed by Samuel to be the first king in Israel. The case of Joseph was another one. God permitted him to be sold into Egypt and eventually imprisoned to accomplish His divine purpose of making him a ruler. David was dedicated to taking care

of his father's sheep in the wilderness. It was through that experience that God trained him as a mighty warrior. He killed a lion and a bear. This experience aided him to fight and defeat Goliath fearlessly. The Lord can use whatever you are passing through to accomplish His divine purpose in your life. **“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose”** (Romans 8:28).

SAUL'S SEARCH FOR THE LOST ASSES (1 Samuel 9:1-6; Matthew 21:28-30; Ephesians 6:1-3; Proverbs 11:14; Matthew 10:6,7; 22:9)

“Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power” (verse 1). This chapter started with the introduction of Kish, the father of Saul. He was from the smallest family in the smallest tribe (Benjamin) of Israel (verse 21). Despite this base background, Kish was described as a mighty man of power. This meant that he did not allow his background to affect him. He trusted in the Lord, gave his best and God reckoned with him.

Question 2: *Should poor background hinder a Christian youth to serve God?*

Those who lack understanding of the workings of God will always blame their poor backgrounds as reasons for their failures in life. They allow it to affect them negatively. For those who have proper understanding of God's knowledge, workings, power and promises, they will turn it around for their good. This is because they know that God **“raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them”** (1 Samuel 2:8). With faith and diligence, God will grant them a fulfilled life. For Kish, he was a mighty man of power. Little wonder God chose his goodly son to become the first king of Israel.

As soon as Saul's father sent him to search for the asses, he obeyed and went after them. Saul was a submissive,

obedient and dutiful youth. He neither grumble like some youths do (Matthew 21:28-30) nor did he go for personal business. He moved from one city to the other seeking for the asses. He was also a considerate youth as the thought of his father's feeling became his concern after three days' search. This is unlike some contemporary youths who are careless about the feelings of their parents. Some could abscond from home for days or go to playgrounds for hours while leaving their school and domestic works unattended to. That is disobedience, disregard and dishonor to one's parents (Ephesians 6:1-3). There are grave consequences for this bad attitude here on earth and in eternity if a youth fails to repent.

Question 3: *What wise decision did Saul take to find the lost asses?*

“And he said unto him, behold now, there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honorable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can shew us our way that we should go” (verse 6). Saul was a good listener. He took the counsel from a servant to seek help from Samuel for solution to the lost asses. Youths who listen to godly and wise counsel will readily get help and solutions to challenges of life (Proverbs 11:14). When necessary, always seek counsel from a godly leader or directly ask help from God.

Just like Kish commanded Saul to go, seek, for the lost asses, the same way, Christ commanded us: **“But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand”** (Matthew 10:6,7). Saved youths should obey the Lord and go in search of sinning youths in their neighborhood. They should not get tired until the lost youths are brought to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. We shall be rewarded for our labour in due time if we obey and faint not (Daniel 12:2).

SAUL SOUGHT HELP FROM SAMUEL ON THE LOST ASSES: (1 Samuel 9:7-14; Psalm 107:7; Isaiah 31:3-5; Proverbs 3:5,9)

“Then said Saul to his servant, But, behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man? for the bread is spent in our vessels, and there is not a present to bring to the man of God: what have we?” (verse 7). As Saul and his servant decided to go to Samuel for help, the need to present him gifts came to his mind. He remembered that those who minister on holy things also live by it. Some youths in the churches today are inconsiderate. They do not see the need to give tithe and offering. All they seek for is what to benefit from ministers. They are not ready to offer anything to them. Though Saul and his servant did not have much to give Samuel, they were ready to offer him what they had. Therefore, it is not out of place for members to take care of their ministers.

Question 4: *In what ways can Christian youths appreciate the people whom God uses to minister to them?*

“Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again” (Luke 6:38). There are many ways saved youths can appreciate their leaders. But the greatest way to do so is to obey God’s word. The delight of youth leaders is to see their flock living by the word of God; fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. They should pay tithes and offerings and be available for weekly meetings. They should show respect and be of help to them when necessary.

Question 5: *Should Christian youths seek help from every prophet or so-called man of God for prayer?*

Christian youths are not expected to seek help from every prophet or man of God because there are many false prophets today. **“But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived”** (2 Timothy 3:13). They should learn how to wait on God themselves. If need be, they should seek help from their immediate leaders. God has put His power in them (Luke 10:19; James 5:16). As they counsel and pray with you in faith, you will receive solution to your challenges. **“And**

as they went up the hill to the city, they found young maidens going out to draw water, and said unto them, Is the seer here?" (verse 11). As Saul approach the city, he did not know where to find Samuel. He then asked for direction from some maids who were on their way to fetch water. It is necessary to always ask for direction whenever you are confused of the way to follow. However, this should be done discreetly. Ask God to lead you and He will. **"And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation"** (Psalm 107:7). You may also ask for directions from men, but be prayerful for God to direct you to the right person, as many youths have been misled by wicked people. Some have lost their lives in the process. Beware! When God lead you, He will always lead you aright. **"And they went up into the city: and when they were come into the city, behold, Samuel came out against them, for to go up to the high place"** (verse 14).

SAMUEL MEETS SAUL (1 Samuel 9:15-27; Isaiah 45:13; Thessalonians 3:11; Habakkuk 2:3; Psalm 37:23)

"Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying, Tomorrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me" (verses 15,16). God ordered the steps of Saul while he was searching for the asses. Hence, He pre-informed Samuel of a man coming next day at that same time; instructing him to anoint him as Captain over His people. God told Samuel that **"he shall save my people out of the hand of the Philistines"**. He also gave reason for His action: **"for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me"**. Youths should note that God is concerned and cares for the welfare of His people. This should give courage to those who are hopeless and think God has forsaken them. Do not give up hope. God is in control! He will surely connect you with your helper.

Question 6: *What do you learn from the order of Saul's meeting with Samuel?*

There are many believers today who do not understand that God is involved in the affairs of their lives. Some of them are so anxious about the future. They are worried and impatient when their aspirations are not accomplished according to their plan. They seem to be running ahead of God. From the order in which Samuel and Saul were brought together it is evident that, **“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way”** (Psalm 37:23). When Saul met Samuel, he received more than he expected. He was made to dine with the prophet. He received honour and exaltation from God. Though he was of the least family of the tribe of Benjamin, he became the chiefest among those to eat in high places. What a great exaltation? Saul became a special figure in Israel from that moment. Samuel had to commune with him in secret upon the top of the house. This reveals that not every matter should be discussed publicly. After coming down, Samuel still caused the servant who went with him to go ahead of them before he showed him the word of the Lord. Christian youths should learn how to handle confidential matters. You should know what to tell a friend, classmate, brother or sister. Learn from Joseph who revealed to his parents and brothers his dream and was envied and sold into Egypt.

Question 7: *What are some of the benefits of walking with God?*

Youths should endeavor to always obey their parents if their request is not contrary to God's demands. You can never tell which errand you will go for them that will lead you into your desired destination. It was David's obedience to Jesse his father to see the state of his brothers at the battle field that led him into stardom as he later fought and defeated Goliath. Walking with God is always of great benefits. Many saints walked with God and received His blessings. Abraham walked with God and became the father of many nations. Joseph walked with God and became a governor in a strange land. David walked with God and became a king. Esther walked with God and

became a queen in a strange land. Ruth walked with God and became a progenitor of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. These men and women are reckoned as men and women of faith (Hebrews 11: 1-30). You too can become great by walking with God.

LESSON 719

SAMUEL ANOINTS SAUL KING

MEMORY VERSE: “Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?” (1 Samuel 10:1).

TEXT: 1 Samuel 10:1-27

Before this time in the history of the Israelites, God had been ruling and directing them as His people through the prophets and judges. This is called “theocracy”. The nation was subject to the will of their invisible, heavenly King in all things. They were servants of God who ruled over their public and private affairs, communicating to them His will through the medium of the prophets. They were subjects of the heavenly King, not an earthly one. They were God’s own subjects, ruled directly by Him (1 Samuel 8:6-9). When Samuel was old and his children who were supposed to take over from him were not living right, the people asked for the appointment of a king to rule over them like other nations. This demand displeased the Lord greatly (1 Samuel 8:4-7).

Question 1: *What is the danger in desiring to be like the ungodly?*

“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” (1 Samuel 8:7). It is a sign of backsliding when one desires to be like the ungodly. Everything we need is in and with God. There are many dangers when a believer seeks to be like unbelievers. In today’s lesson, we shall consider the setting up of a kingdom ruled by a king; its process and implication on the people.

SAUL, ANOINTED KING BY SAMUEL (1 Samuel 10:1-8; 9:15-17; 15:1; Daniel 2:20,21; 2 Kings 9:3; Psalm 20:6; Genesis 21:22; Deuteronomy 20:1-4; Joshua 1:8)

“Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance...?” (verse 1). When Samuel anointed Saul, he assured him that it was God’s act to make him king. **“Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee?”** This signified the release of anointing on him that will be needed for the discharge of his duties.

Question 2: What lessons can we learn from the way Saul was anointed by Samuel?

Samuel’s explanation during the ceremony pointed out some vital lessons

(1) He kissed him – this is a sign of acceptance and reverence as the manner of the Jews. Hence, we must welcome, respect and honour whomsoever the Lord appoints over us in the church and fellowship.

(2) He was anointed to be a captain. This signifies that he must be ready to care, toil, and face danger. Likewise, leaders must be ready to do the same.

(3) The origin of his appointment – **“the Lord hath anointed thee”** – means his appointment was not by self but by the Lord. He must therefore, rule for Him, in dependence on Him and with the aim of glorifying Him.

(4) Saul is to rule over God’s inheritance; to take care and protect it. He will order all the affairs of it for the best, as a steward whom a great man sets over his estate to manage it and give an account of it to Him.

Question 3: What are the significance of those signs given to Saul?

Samuel gave some signs which would come to pass the same day as a confirmation that he spoke as directed by God and to give Saul important lessons of life. **“Then shalt thou go on forward from thence, and thou shalt come to the plain of Tabor, and there shall meet thee three**

men going up to God to Bethel..." (verse 3). This was to make him know that when he got to the throne he should not forget to worship God and render due sacrifices to Him. He must be ready to share, care and give to the needy. **"And they will salute thee, and give thee two loaves of bread; which thou shalt receive of their hands"** (verse 4). This hill of God refers to the high place of God, His presence and His place of worship. This was where Saul was to be divinely influenced, filled with the Spirit of the Lord, prophesied along with the prophets and possessed another heart (verse 6). To be a successful leader, you must be filled with the Holy Spirit and possess another heart, which is of God (Acts 13:22).

Samuel told Saul that after God has shown him all these signs, he would know that he is under His special guidance. He should not fear to undertake anything that belongs to his appointed office, because God is with him. Christian youths should ready to undertake any service of God when they are called. The presence of God is a sign of strength and courage to His children (Genesis 21:22; Deuteronomy 20:1-4; Joshua 1:8,9). **"And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal; and, behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee, and shew thee what thou shalt do"** (verse 8). This was to teach Saul the acts of patience. It is always good and a mark of maturity to wait for instructions to avoid mistakes.

SPIRITUAL QUALIFICATION FOR SERVICE (1 Samuel 10:9-16; Luke 24:49; Acts 2:1-7; 1 Peter 2:9; Acts 1:8; 2:39; 19:2; 1 Corinthians 12:31; 14:5; Proverbs 29:11; Habakkuk 2:3)

"And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day" (verse 9). This was to prove that all Samuel did was approved by God. God makes whosoever He calls to His service fit for it. Those He called are special; therefore, they are to wait for the outpouring of His power upon them like He did on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-7). The presence of God's Spirit's

power confirms His calling in our lives (Acts 1:8; 2:39). This makes a difference in our lives and ministry. The question now is: “...**Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?**” (Acts 19:2). Also, Saul applied wisdom in dealing with the issue concerning the kingdom.

Question 4: *What is the place of wisdom in giving out information?*

“**And Saul’s uncle said, Tell me, I pray thee, what Samuel said unto you. And Saul said unto his uncle, He told us plainly that the asses were found. But of the matter of the kingdom, whereof Samuel spake, he told him not**” (verses 15,16). Saul applied wisdom not to disclose the matter of the kingdom Samuel told him. Christian youths should be wise not to disclose personal information revealed to them by God to anyone except when necessary (Proverbs 4:7; 29:11). Apart from the display of wisdom by Saul, we saw humility in him. If he had allowed the wonderful opportunity and experiences he had to intoxicate him, he would have been boastful to his relations at this point. This could have generated envy and raised a challenge for him like that of Joseph and his brethren. Truly he had possessed another heart, to be able to keep information. A leader must learn information management. In obedience to the word of prophet Samuel, Saul shows how to depend on God.

SAUL’S APPOINTMENT AND INTRODUCTION TO THE PEOPLE (1 Samuel 10:17-27; 12:13-16; 8:7-9; Deuteronomy 8:12-14; 1 Samuel 11:12-15; 1 Peter 2:13-17)

“**And Samuel called the people together unto the LORD to Mizpeh**” (verse 17). Saul’s appointment to be the first king in Israel was made public before the elders of Israel at Mizpeh. In verses 18 and 19, prophet Samuel told them the consequences of their decision of requesting for a king. This means they rejected the control, direction and leadership of God over them, having forgotten all that He had done for them in the past.

Question 5: *What is the danger of forgetting the goodness of God?*

The moment any youth forgets the goodness of God over his life, it will affect his loyalty, respect and obedience to Him. Such act always incurs God's wrath and judgment (Deuteronomy 8:12-14). **"And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was taken"** (verse 20). Though Samuel knew the chosen person, yet, he allowed all the twelve tribes to be involved. Some might have focused on the tribe of Judah because of what was said of Judah and Benjamin (Genesis 49:10; 27). We should settle our minds that God is not a man; He rules in the affairs of men and does what pleases Him (Psalm 75:6,7).

Meanwhile, Saul went to hide himself, perhaps because of shyness or fear or maybe he counted himself unfit for the task. This is what usually happens when someone is called to higher responsibility. But when you put your trust in the Lord and not on self, you will surely succeed.

"And Samuel said to all the people, see ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king" (verse 24). As Saul was introduced and presented to the people, they welcomed and accepted him. We must accept and welcome whosoever God places over us in the church and fellowship. Those who despise the anointed of God and react negatively to an appointed person were called children of Belial (verse 27). Christian youths are to avoid such company of despisers but submit to whosoever is appointed over them (1 Peter 2:13-17; Ecclesiastes 10:20; Proverbs 1:7,10,11). **"Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house"** (verse 25). Prophet Samuel wrote how the king would govern them in the book which he had rehearsed to them before now (1 Samuel 8:11-19). After the occasion, Samuel sent **"every man to his house. And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched"** (verse 25,26). It is noteworthy to mention that Saul held his peace towards those who despised him (verse 27). **"Let this mind be in you, which**

was also in Christ Jesus: 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” (Philippians 2:5-7). Like Christ, he held his peace when he was insulted.

VICTORY OF JABESH OVER AMMON

MEMORY VERSE: “And it was so on the morrow, that Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the host in the morning watch, and slew the Ammonites until the heat of the day: and it came to pass, that they which remained were scattered, so that two of them were not left together” (1 Samuel 11:11).

TEXT: 1 Samuel 11:1-15

Saul was appointed the first king of Israel according to the request of the children of Israel. “**And Samuel said to all the people, see ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king**” (1 Samuel 10:24). His first assignment was to fight against the Ammonites who had given Jabesh a cruel condition for peace. At this juncture, the people of Jabesh sent to Israel for help. When Saul heard of the situation, the Spirit of God came upon him and requested everyone in Israel to unite together to help their brethren. Through God-given strategies, they had victory over Ammon. From this first victory, his kingdom was renewed by Samuel. “**Then said Samuel to the people, Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there**” (verse 14).

Today, there is still warfare against the people of God. The victory of God’s people is through Jesus Christ, our unconquerable Captain. “**But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ**” (1 Corinthians 15:57). We should trust in His promise and our victory will be sure.

THE AMMONITES’ CRUEL CONDITION FOR PEACE: (1 Samuel 11:1-3; 12:12; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; James 4:4; 1 Kings 11:1-11)

Nahash was the king of Ammon (1 Samuel 12:12). He and his people made war with Jabeshgilead. Unfortunately, the

men of Jabesh agreed to make a covenant with him to serve him. **“Then Nahash the Ammonite came up, and encamped against Jabeshgilead: and all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash, make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee”** (verse 1).

Question 1: *What was the condition of the covenant?*

“And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, on this condition will I make a covenant with you, that I may thrust out all your right eyes, and lay it for a reproach upon all Israel” (verse 2). The condition of the covenant was that their right eyes would be removed and laid **“for a reproach upon all Israel”**. What a cruel and unscriptural covenant! The Scripture has warned Christians from unscriptural covenant with unbelievers. **“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?”** (2 Corinthians 6:14).

Question 2: *In what areas should Christian youths not make covenant with unbelievers?*

Christian youths should not have intimate relationship with unbelievers in every aspect of their lives. The only duty they have is to preach the gospel to them. Specific areas God warn believers against unscriptural relationship with unbelievers includes friendship, marriage, fellowship, worship, business, etc. Disobedience to this command is dangerous. However, a call to Christian separation is not isolation from people.

“And the elders of Jabesh said unto him, Give us seven days’ respite, that we may send messengers unto all the coasts of Israel: and then, if there be no man to save us, we will come out to thee” (verse 3). The men of Jabesh did well by not responding immediately to the request of Ammon. They asked for seven days’ respite and were ready to seek for help. Christian youths must not be rash to respond to unscriptural invitations. They need to seek counsel and pray for divine direction. The book of Proverbs counsels us thus: **“Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety”** (Proverbs 11:14).

VICTORY THROUGH CO-OPERATION AND UNITY:

(1 Samuel 11:4-11; Acts 1:8; 13:1-4; John 14:15-18; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Psalm 133:1-3)

“Then came the messengers to Gibeah of Saul, and told the tidings in the ears of the people: and all the people lifted up their voices, and wept” (verse 4). The people of Israel were concerned when they heard the cruel, unscriptural condition of the Ammonites. They **“lifted up their voices, and wept”**. We should be concerned, pray and take reasonable actions to render help for fellow Christian youths who are in distress. We should be our brother’s keeper.

“And the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly” (verse 6). Saul returned from the field, found the people weeping and asked: **“What aileth the people that they weep?”** Immediately, the Spirit of God came upon him and he sprang into action. There is not much we can do without the Spirit of God.

Question 3: Mention people who had victory in battles through the help of the Spirit of God.

Examples abound in the Scriptures of people who depended on the Spirit of God for victory. Some of them are: Jephthah (Judges 11:29,32), Othniel (Judges 3:9,10), Gideon (Judges 6:33-36), Samson (Judges 13:24,25; 14:6,19), David (1 Samuel 16:13), Paul (1 Corinthians 2:1,2,4), etc. To possess the Spirit of God, you must be saved from sin, sanctified and pray in faith for the infilling of the Spirit. You need the impact of the Spirit of God in everything you do.

Saul, through the help of the Spirit of God, sent for the children of Israel. The response was great and encouraging.

The Scripture says, **“the fear of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out with one consent”**. There was co-operation and unity among them. The youth fellowship will not make progress without the co-operation and unity of all its members. **“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon**

the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore" (Psalm 133:1-3).

"And they said unto the messengers that came, thus shall ye say unto the men of Jabeshgilead, Tomorrow, by that time the sun be hot, ye shall have help. And the messengers came and shewed it to the men of Jabesh; and they were glad" (verse 9). When Saul gathered 330,000 men, the people of Israel assured Jabesh of help and they were glad. Through the Spirit's leading, Saul divided the men into three groups. The strategy worked for them; since God was involved, victory was sure.

Youth leaders should seek the Lord and receive directives on how to evangelize schools. Paul and Barnabas were sent by God on missionary work. They depended on the Holy Spirit for success. **"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So, they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus"** (Acts 13:2-4).

SAMUEL CALLS ISRAEL TO RENEW THE KINGDOM: (1 Samuel 11:12-15; 10:26,27)

Before this victory, **"Saul also went home to Gibeah; and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched. But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no presents. But he held his peace"** (1 Samuel 10:26,27). After the victory, the people told Samuel that, **"Who is he that said, Shall Saul reign over us? bring the men, that we may put them to death"** (verse 12). God used the battle to confirm Saul as king. There may be opposition to your appointed ministry but God who appointed you will convince those opposing you beyond reasonable doubt.

Question 4: *What was Saul's response to the judgment placed on his opposers?*

“And Saul said, there shall not a man be put to death this day: for today the LORD hath wrought salvation in Israel” (verse 13). He was humble and considerate. He did not allow anyone to be put to death for opposing him. He attributed the victory to the Lord. This attitude of Saul made Samuel to renew or confirm his kingdom. **“Then said Samuel to the people, Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there. And all the people went to Gilgal; and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal; and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly”** (verses 14,15).

As we conclude this lesson, we learn the following: **One**, do not rush to make covenant or agreement with anybody. **Two**, seek help from the people of God when in distress. **Three**, Christian youths should arise in unity to help fellow Christian youths who are in distress. **Four**, everyone who desires victory must seek the help of the Spirit of the Lord for divine direction. **Five**, we should remain humble when we accomplish great things for the Lord.

LESSON 721

BELIEVERS' ENRICHMENT THROUGH CHRIST

MEMORY VERSE: “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).

TEXT: Ephesians 1:1-14

The book of Ephesians is one of the epistles or letters written by Paul the apostle. The purpose was to strengthen believers' faith in Christ. It is a letter of encouragement and enlightenment of believers' enrichment through Christ Jesus. The book has six chapters with one hundred and fifty-five verses. It can be divided into two equal parts. The first three chapters deal with doctrinal teachings such as: redemption through Christ's blood (Ephesians 1:7), Christ's death and resurrection (Ephesians 1:19,20), salvation by grace (Ephesians 2:1-8), reconciliation through Christ (Ephesians 2:13-18) and the mystery of Christ (Ephesians 3:3,4). The last three chapters deal with practical teachings such as: our walk in Christ (Ephesians 4:1-3), believers' ministries in the body of Christ, the church (Ephesians 4:11-14), relationship in Christian families (Ephesians 5:22-33; 6:1-4), relationship between masters and servants (Ephesians 6:5-9) and the believers' spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:10-18). In summary, this epistle tells us about our wealth and walk in Christ.

In our text, the apostle started the epistle by sending greetings to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ (verses 1,2). He then revealed the spiritual blessings we receive from God through Christ. We should know that all blessings from God are by His grace and the power of His grace can do wonders in us. We should accept, believe and demonstrate His grace in our lives.

DIVINE EPISTLE TO THE SAINTS (Ephesians 1:1,2; Colossians 1:1,2; Galatians 1:1; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2,3; 4:17; Titus 2:11,12)

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus” (verse 1). An apostle is a sent one. Paul was an apostle sent by Jesus Christ to preach His unsearchable gospel. This was the will of God for him. As part of his ministry, he wrote a letter to the saints in Ephesus.

Question 1: *How can a youth become a saint?*

“To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 1:7). Youths can become saints while still alive and not after death. To become a saint, a sinning youth should turn away from his sins, accept Christ by faith and receive grace to live a righteous life. As saints, we have a covenant with God through the blood of Jesus Christ. This brings us into a closer relationship with God as our Father, which gives us the privilege to serve Him.

Question 2: *According to verse 1 of our text, what is God’s requirement from saints?*

“To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Colossians 1:2). The requirement of God as our Father from all His saints is faithfulness to Christ. We are to be faithful in serving Him, living a holy life, preaching the gospel, expecting His coming, studying and passing our examinations for His glory, etc. To fulfil these responsibilities, we need His grace.

Question 3: *What is the power of God’s grace in our lives?*

“Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ” (verse 2). Grace simply means **God’s Riches, Redemption, Renewal, Restoration and Revival At Christ’s Expense**. The power of God’s grace is what changes a sinning youth to a saint without human

effort. This grace brings salvation free of charge from God to man. It helps us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. It gives strength to live righteously and godly in this present evil world. Everyone alive today needs this divine power of grace. **“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). When this grace of God reaches your life, it will not leave you the way it met you. Your testimony will be: **“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).

The moment we truly receive God's grace, His peace will be experienced in our hearts. **“Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”** (Romans 5:1). Jesus is the only One who can give lasting peace. He is the Prince of peace (Ephesians 2:13-18). Every youth should allow God's grace and peace through Christ Jesus to rule and reign in his or her heart and life.

DIVINE BLESSINGS THROUGH THE SAVIOUR
(Ephesians 1:3-10; 2 Corinthians 1:3; John 14:1-3; Luke 1:70-75)

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (verse 3). The apostle praised God for the spiritual blessings we receive through Christ. These spiritual blessings are uncountable and unsearchable. They are available for everyone who seeks the Lord in prayer and faith through Christ. God will not be glorified through the life of anyone who is spiritually poor when Christ has paid and provided all spiritual blessings for him.

Question 4: *From our text, what are the spiritual blessings available through Christ?*

Some spiritual blessings God gives to believers through Christ are: **one**, believers are chosen of God (Ephesians

1:4; Exodus 19:3-6; John 15:16). Salvation is the work of God. He saves us by His mercy. He chooses us according to His plan and will. This privilege of being chosen by God makes us peculiar youths. **Two**, believers are called to holiness and blamelessness (Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:14-16; Luke 1:75). We are called to be holy, because God is holy. This is a high calling in Christ Jesus. **Three**, we are adopted as God's children (Ephesians 1:5; Galatians 4:4-7). As part of His blessings for believers, we are adopted to be His children. We therefore have access to all His promises and inheritance. **Four**, believers are accepted as His beloved (Ephesians 1:6; Matthew 3:17). As the beloved of God, He specially takes care of us by protecting, providing and preserving us from danger. **Five**, we have complete redemption and forgiveness of sins (Ephesians 1:7; Romans 3:23,24; 1 Corinthians 6:20). In the Old Testament, redemption was the price paid to free a slave (Leviticus 25:47-54). Today, through the death of Christ, He has paid the complete price to free all sinners from their sins. What a glorious position for those who accept and believe in Christ!

Six, we receive wisdom and prudence (Ephesians 1:8; 1 Timothy 3:15; James 1:5). The greatest wisdom is the one that helps us to be free from sin. **"And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus"** (2 Timothy 3:15). **Seven**, we receive revelation of God's will (Ephesians 1:9; 5:16,17). The good pleasure and purpose of God is to reveal His will to believers. Knowing His will saves us from wrong decisions in life. **Eight**, we have the promise of gathering with other believers in Christ at the rapture (Ephesians 1:10; John 14:1-3). The promise of the rapture was first given by the Lord Jesus. Here, the apostle reminded the saints of this great gathering in Christ. This is the hope of all saints. **Nine**, we have the promise of divine inheritance (Ephesians 1:11; Hebrews 9:18). Through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, He has provided eternal inheritance which does not fade. **Ten**, we have the promise of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13; John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13). The Spirit of God in us shows His seal that we belong

to Him (John 1:12). The presence of the Holy Spirit in us demonstrates the genuineness of our faith and proof that we are His children. How unsearchable are His blessings! Therefore, let us pray that the fullness of God fills and rest on us through Christ. **“For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell”** (Colossians 1:19).

DIVINE INHERITANCE BY THE SPIRIT (Ephesians 1:11-14; Hebrews 9:15; 1 Peter 1:4; Acts 2:41,44; 4:32; 16:30,31; Romans 3:23-26; 4:5; 5:1,2; 10:8-13; Ephesians 2:8,9)

“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will” (verse 11). The plan and purpose of God in saving us from sin through Christ is to give us divine and eternal inheritance in heaven. These inheritances include salvation (Hebrews 9:15), sanctification (Acts 20:32), Spirit’s power (Ephesians 1:13,14), the riches of His glory (Ephesians 1:18), the Kingdom of Christ (Ephesians 5:5), etc. Living in sin and evil will disqualify any youth from enjoying these inheritances.

“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise” (verse 13). The word of truth or the gospel of salvation will only be profitable when we believe in the sacrifice of Christ’s death. Then, the Holy Spirit bears witness in our hearts that we are His children (Romans 8:16).

Question 5: *Why is faith important in receiving salvation?*

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Romans 10:9). Faith is essential in dealing with God. It is the only means of receiving blessings from Him. It is when we put our trust and confidence in Christ as our Substitute and Savior that salvation becomes ours. Faith is **Forsaking All I Trust Him**. It also means **Forsaking All Iniquities Through Him**. Therefore, you must forsake all your sinful ways,

pleasures, works and self-righteousness and trust Him to grant you His grace freely. The power of His grace will change your sinful life and habits to godly ones in Christ.

Question 6: *Why does the Lord enrich believers with spiritual blessings through Christ?*

“That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ” (verse 12). There is nothing God does without a purpose. The purpose of the Lord enriching believers with spiritual blessings in Christ are:

- a) it brings praise to Him (verse 3);
- b) to fulfil the good pleasure of His will (verse 5);
- c) to praise the power of His grace (verse 6);
- d) to demonstrate the riches of His grace (verse 7);
- e) to fulfil His plan and purpose (verse 9);
- f) to be the praise of His glory (verse 12); and
- g) to fulfil the counsel of His will (verse 11).

The Scripture says: **“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. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God”** (1 Corinthians 2:9,10). The more you pray and study this epistle to the saints in Christ, the more you see the depth and unsearchable revelation. Christian youths should use this lesson as a stepping stone into divine revelation of His knowledge and experience in Christ. They should also pray that the riches of His grace should flow in their hearts and lives. This will bring glory and praise to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

LESSON 722

INTERCESSION FOR BELIEVERS' SPIRITUAL GROWTH

MEMORY VERSE: “Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers” (Ephesians 1:15,16).

TEXT: Ephesians 1:15-23

The revelation of God’s spiritual blessings through Christ leads to spiritual growth in the lives of believers. In his letter to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ, the Apostle prayed for them to be partakers of these spiritual blessings in reality. The desire and determination of all Christian youths and leaders is to grow spiritually. We are challenged thus to **“grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen”** (2 Peter 3:18). The content of the Apostle’s prayer for the Ephesian believers is a standard for leaders’ intercession for their members. Leaders should learn to devote time to pray for their followers before and after preaching to them.

Question 1: (a) What is intercessory prayer? (b) Give examples of people who interceded in the Bible.

“Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God” (Colossians 4:12). Intercessory prayer means praying for others. It is a sacrificial service rendered on behalf of others for God to fulfil His purpose and plan in their lives. It takes God-given love to pray sincerely and deeply for others’ spiritual and physical well-being. Sometimes, the people who need our prayers may not know their needs. Yet, we should pray for them. The Bible is replete with examples of great intercessors. They include: Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Daniel, Nehemiah, Paul, Epaphras, etc. Today, Jesus is still praying for us. **“Wherefore he is able**

also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25). Let us follow Christ as our model in the School of intercessory prayer.

BASIS OF SCRIPTURAL FELLOWSHIP (Ephesians 1:15,16; Acts 2:41-47; 4:31-34; 6:1-4; 11:22-26; 1 Thessalonians 2:13)

“Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers” (verses 15,16). Paul the apostle wrote to the saints about their faith in the Lord and love to other saints. This made him to remember them in his prayers.

Question 2: *What are the two scriptural pillars that promote scriptural fellowship?*

From our text, the two scriptural pillars that promote scriptural fellowship are faith in Christ and love for the brethren. Anyone who does not have faith in Christ as his Lord and Savior is not part of the Christian fellowship. Hence, he will not be able to love the brethren sincerely, sacrificially and scripturally. In the early Church, no one joined himself to them, except they believed in the Lord and turned away from evil. **“And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women”** (Acts 5:13,14). Acts of the Apostles further gives the characteristics of those who were members of the early Church. These members were saved, separated from evil, sanctified, Scripture-saturated, Spirit-filled and sacrificial in sharing.

Question 3: *In what practical ways can Christian youths demonstrate love towards others in the fellowship?*

“And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common” (Acts 4:32). Christian youths can demonstrate love to others in the fellowship by sharing what they possess to meet their spiritual, social, physical and academic needs. **“But whoso hath**

this world's good, and seeth his brother has need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but indeed, and in truth" (1 John 3:17,18).

BIBLICAL SUPPLICATION FOR THE FAITHFUL:
(Ephesians 1:16-19; 3:14-21; 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13; Romans 10:1 Philippians 1:4; Ezekiel 22:30)

The subject of prayer is very essential in the life and ministry of a Christian youth. Prayer is the only means of talking with God our Father in heaven. It is the only way to make our needs known to Him. He is always ready to answer all our requests without delay if it is His will. However, there are different forms of prayer. **One**, the prayer of praise and worship. **"Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers"** (Ephesians 1:16). **Two**, the prayer of petition and supplication (Ephesians 6:16). **Three**, the prayer of spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:10-12). **Four**, the prayer of intercession (Ephesians 1:16). This last form of prayer is what we will shall focus on, in this lesson. However, the life and character of the intercessors are essential for effective prayer.

Question 4: *What are the basic requirements of an effective intercessor?*

"Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers" (verse 16). Jesus Christ is our greatest Example and Model in everything. However, from our text, taking Paul the apostle as a guide, the following requirements are essential for the effectiveness of intercessors. **One**, an effective intercessor must be saved, sanctified, separated from evil, Spirit-filled and Scripture-saturated. **Two**, he or she must be disciplined, devoted, determined, diligent and desire to see Christ formed and demonstrated in the lives of those he is praying for. **Three**, an effective intercessor must be focused, faithful and full of faith in the promises of God. **Four**, he must not be a praise seeker.

Paul the apostle prayed for the churches and converts always and without ceasing. He challenged us thus: **"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel**

is, that they might be saved”. “Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy”. “We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you”. “I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day” (Romans 10:1; Philippians 1:4; Colossians 1:3; 2 Timothy 1:3). The Lord expressed His desire through prophet Ezekiel. “**And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none**” (Ezekiel 22:30). Are you ready to answer His call?

Question 5: *From verses 17-19, what was the content of Paul’s prayer for the Ephesian believers?*

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints” (verses 17,18). The content of Paul’s prayer for the Ephesian believers was:

(a) *Spirit of wisdom.* Divine wisdom enables us to decide for Christ without delay. Wisdom from above helps believers to be pure, peaceful, gentle and bear the fruit of righteousness.

(b) *Revelation of His knowledge.* The more we know God through Christ, the better for believers. The best way to know Him is through Christ.

(c) *Spiritual understanding.* He prayed that God should enlighten their spiritual understanding. This will help them to understand His will for their lives (Ephesians 5:17).

(d) *To know the hope of their calling.* The hope of our calling is to get to heaven. In Christ, we have the following hope: resurrection of life (1 Corinthians 15:19- 23), reigning with Christ in His Kingdom (2 Timothy 2:11- 13; Revelation 22:5), eternal inheritance in heaven (1 Peter 1: 4; Colossians 1: 5) and complete and perfect transformation into the image of Christ (1 John 3:1,2). What a depth of prayers for others!

It is only the Spirit of God that gives such prayer points to Spirit-filled believers who will be faithful and obedient.

(e) *The riches of God's glory* refer to the abundance of spiritual blessings, the precious promises and the eternal hope of the believers. The more we experience His presence, the more we receive His revelation.

(f) *Inheritance for the saints.* This is the unfading substance in heaven reserved as a reward for serving the Lord faithfully to the end (1 Peter 1:4).

(g) *The greatness of His power.* Paul prayed that God should demonstrate His power in the lives of believers once again as He did when He raised Christ from the dead. It therefore, means that God's incomparable power is available to help you in any circumstance. The Scripture says that there is nothing too difficult or hard for Him (Jeremiah 32:17,27).

Question 6: *What are the benefits of powerful intercession?*

“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you” (Galatians 4:19). Powerful intercessory prayer will bring spiritual experiences like salvation, sanctification and the infilling of the Holy Spirit's power. It will lead to spiritual stability and steadfastness in faith. It will grant power to overcome temptation and sin. It will bring spiritual growth and maturity. It will lead to revealing and stirring up of spiritual gifts (2 Timothy 1:6). Join in praying for others from now on.

BENEFITS OF THE SUPERNATURAL FROM THE FATHER (Ephesians 1:19-23; 2:4-7; 3:19; Colossians 1:16-19; Acts 2:22-24; John 1:14,16)

When we believe in Christ, God transfers His power into our lives. When we allow His power to work mightily in us, it will transform us for His glory. **“And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power”** (verse 19).

Question 7: *From verse 20 of our text, state three things the power of God did in Christ.*

“Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places” (verse 20). The power of God demonstrated in Christ did three things; namely: resurrection, transformation and exaltation. First, God demonstrated His power by raising Christ from the dead to life again. The facts and proofs of His resurrection are all over the Scriptures. **“And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay”** (Matthew 28:5,6). Second, He transformed and translated Christ from the earth to heaven without the help of technology. **“And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel”** (Acts 1:9,10). Third, after the resurrection and translation, He highly exalted Christ and set Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above principalities and powers (verses 20,21). What God did in Christ, is what He does in the life of a believer. The apostle shows how this is demonstrated in the life of believers thus: **“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”** (Ephesians 2:1,6). What a privilege we have in Christ!

“Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come” (verse 21). In God’s wisdom, He translated Christ above principality, power, dominion and every name whether in this world or the one to come. He has therefore, put all things under His feet. He made Him the Head of all things to the Church. The Church which is His body is where the fullness of God dwells.

As we come to the end of this lesson, it takes the Spirit of God to reveal these things to believers. We cannot understand the depth of God’s riches except by the prayer of faith. Therefore, let us wait upon the Lord to practically

experience the reality of this in our lives. Also, let us allow Christ to take His rightful place in our church and fellowship so that we can enjoy God's fullness. **"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell"** (Colossians 1:18,19).

LESSON 723

SALVATION BY GRACE

MEMORYVERSE: “**For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast**” (Ephesians 2:8,9).

TEXT: Ephesians 2:1-22

The first chapter of the book of Ephesians ended with the demonstration of the power of God for the church.

In chapter two, Paul the apostle revealed how that power is being demonstrated in the lives of believers. He shows us our old conditions before receiving Christ (verses 1-3); our new position in Him and our privileges through grace and faith (verses 4-9).

Question 1: *What is salvation through grace?*

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8,9). Salvation is a transformation, change or conversion in the heart by faith through the power of the gospel of Christ. This is possible through the grace of God. It is a great gift from God through His love and mercy. God is so rich in love and mercy that He paid for our salvation without requiring anything from us. **“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)”** (verses 4,5).

Furthermore, God is rich in goodness, forbearance and longsuffering (Romans 2: 4), wisdom and knowledge (Romans 11:33), grace and mercy (Ephesians 1:1,7; 2:4). On the other hand, where there is grace of God, there will be: truthfulness (John 1:14,17), Spirit of supplication (Zechariah 12:10), pureness of heart (Proverbs 22:11), lowliness of heart (Proverbs 3:3,4; James 4:6), good communication (Colossians 4:6), peace with God (2 Peter 1;2), fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23), favor with God

and men (Esther 2:17), signs and wonders (Acts 14:3), gift of righteousness (Romans 5:17) and the knowledge of God (2 Peter 3:18). The importance of grace cannot be overstated. We are saved by grace; therefore, we should continue in grace and grow in grace. We should not frustrate the grace of God in our lives. **“I do not frustrate the grace of God...”** (Galatians 2:21). We should seek the Lord for more, then great grace will be upon our Christian lives daily. **“And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all”** (Acts 4:31,33).

PRACTICE AND CONSEQUENCES OF SIN (Ephesians 2: 1-3, 11, 12; Psalm 7: 11; 9: 17; Revelation 20:11-15; 2 Corinthians 4:3,4; Ephesians 4:17-19)

“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins” (verse 1). This verse describes a sinner as dead. There are three kinds of death. These are physical, spiritual and eternal deaths. Physical death is the separation of the body from the soul. **“To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted”** (Ecclesiastes 3:1,2). Spiritual death is the separation of the spirit from God though the person may still be physically alive. **“But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth”** (1 Timothy 5:6). From the above passage, sin causes spiritual death. Eternal death is the separation of the spirit, soul and body from God forever. **“And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire”** (Revelation 20:14,15). Therefore, when physical death occurs and the person is dead spiritually, the result is eternal death. It is a great tragedy to live in sin when there is opportunity to repent, believe in Christ and avoid hell fire.

In verses 2 and 3, the Scripture tells us about who controls the sinners. A sinner is controlled by the worldly system. He is also controlled by the prince of the power of the air, that is, the devil, who oversees the world system (2 Corinthians 4:3,4). Therefore, the outcome of being controlled by the devil is the spirit of disobedience. A life controlled by Satan and his agents is filled with all unrighteousness and wickedness (Romans 1:29-32), works of the flesh and its lusts (Galatians 5:19-21), defilement and evil (Mark 7:21-23). Such youths will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9,10). Every Christian youth need to ask himself this pertinent question: Where will you spend eternity? Is your heart and life filled with evil, sin and wickedness? **“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?”** (Hebrews 2:3).

Question 2: *What are the consequences of living in sin?*

“That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world” (verse 12). There are many consequences of sin now and in eternity. From our text, some are: **(i)** A life without Christ – This indicates a life of no peace, protection or preservation from enemies. **(ii)** An alien to the Kingdom of God and His church. **(iii)** A stranger to the promises of God. **(iv)** A life of no hope to meet the Creator in the end **(v)** A life without God; which means he is an enemy of God (James 4:4). If you are still living in sin, how long will you continue to be an enemy of God?

PARDON AND CONVERSION THROUGH THE SAVIOUR: (Ephesians 2:4-10; Acts 4:12; 15:11; Romans 3:23,24; 5:15; Isaiah 55:6,7; Colossians 2:13; Romans 6:4,5; Ephesians 1:19,20)

Pardon from sin and conversion from old lifestyle of evil into a new creature is absolutely the work of grace through Jesus Christ. **“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”** (Acts 4:12).

Question 3: *On what basis does God pardon our sins?*

“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us” (verse 4). Human mind cannot compute and imagine the richness of God’s attributes. The basis of receiving pardon, forgiveness and a change of life in Christ is God’s mercy, love and grace. Mercy means showing pity, kindness and sympathy on the undeserving and unqualified. Sin and wickedness have disqualified us before God Almighty. Yet, His mercy brought Jesus to us with His salvation. The Scripture says: **“By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil”** (Proverbs 16:6). On the other hand, love is unselfish, benevolent concern for another person who is unable to pay for his needs. We cannot pay for the salvation of our souls. **“They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: (For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever:)”** (Psalm 49:6-8). Only Jesus Christ, through the love of God, paid for our salvation (Romans 5:8). Finally, the grace of God brought salvation down to us free of charge. Grace is undeserved favor from God to sinners (Titus 2:11,12).

The results of God’s pardon and forgiveness for our sins are great and wonderful. **One**, He quickened or made us alive spiritually (verses 1,5). **Two**, He raised us up together with Christ (verse 6). **Three**, He made us to sit together with Christ in heavenly places (verse 6). The purpose is to show the exceeding riches of His grace towards sinful youths through Christ (verse 7).

Question 4: *How do we receive salvation through grace?*

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (verses 8,9). For a sinner to experience salvation, he must take the following steps: **One**, he must repent and turn away from all known sins. **Two**, he must believe that God raised Jesus from the dead for his forgiveness. **Three**, he must pray for God to forgive him. **“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath**

raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:9,10,13).

“...it is the gift of God” The great God has wonderful gifts for His creatures. Some of them are: gift of eternal life (Romans 6:23), gift of righteousness (Romans 5:17) and gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Other gifts are: success and security, healing and health, promotion and preservation, prosperity and protection, supply and satisfaction, etc. All these gifts are by His grace (Romans 5:15). Let us launch into these gifts for our good.

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (verse 10). When we receive salvation into our hearts, a change and transformation takes place immediately. Through this salvation, we are transformed by Christ, transformed in Christ and transformed for Christ (Colossians 1:16). Therefore, at salvation, you become a new youth made in Christ.

PEACE AND ACCESS THROUGH THE BLOOD OF CHRIST (Ephesians 2:13-22; 3:11,12; Colossians 1:20-22)

Question 5: *What are the benefits of Christ’s blood?*

“But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ” (verse 13). The power and profits of Christ’s blood are innumerable. The benefits of Christ’s blood to man are that: **(a)** we are brought near to God (verse 13); **(b)** we have peace with Him (verse 14); **(c)** we have reconciliation with Him (verse 16); **(d)** we have access by the Spirit to the Father (verse 18); **(e)** we become fellow heavenly citizens with other saints (verse 19); **(f)** we are built as God’s spiritual temple (verses 20-22); and **(g)** we have eternal inheritance in heaven (Ephesians 1:14). It is our duty to appropriate these benefits into our lives through prayer and faith.

Divine and lasting peace is through Christ, the Prince of peace. He is also the Chief Cornerstone of our lives.

This is the reason our lives are built upon Him. **“And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit”** (verses 20-22).

LESSON 724

MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH REVEALED

MEMORY VERSE: “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Ephesians 3:8).

TEXT: Ephesians 3:1-21

The book of Ephesians is rich in many ways. It has spiritual and physical riches in every chapter. Our study today is the climax of the unsearchable riches of Christ for believers. It deals with the revelation and riches of the mystery of Christ and prayer by apostle Paul for the Ephesian believers to be filled with the fullness of Christ.

Question 1: *What is mystery?*

Mystery is a belief or truth that is beyond human understanding, but can be known only by divine revelation. A mystery (hidden divine secret) was made plain in our text by the Spirit of God. **“Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit”** (verses 4,5). The mystery here is God’s purpose to make both Jews and Gentiles one in the body of Christ, the Church. This was made possible through the death of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:14,15; 1 Corinthians 12:12,13; Colossians 3:10,11). The revelation of this mystery was committed to Paul the apostle. The Church is a mystery to the Old Testament saints. The Church is described as the body of Christ, the bride of Christ and the temple of Christ.

These symbolize life, love and glory of Christ. **“This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church”** (Ephesians 5:32). Other mysteries of God are His wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:7), the rapture of the saints (1 Corinthians 15:51), the riches of His glory (Colossians 1:27), godliness (1 Timothy 3:16), etc.

REVELATION OF THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST: (Ephesians 3:1-7; 4:1-3; Ephesians 4:7; 1 Corinthians 2:9-16; Romans 16:25)

“For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles” (verse 1). The power and purpose of God demonstrated in the life of Paul was immeasurable. Though he was **“a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious”** before (1 Timothy 1:13), yet, the grace of God transformed him into a great asset for heavenly use. One of the greatest ministries he received from the Lord was the ministry of writing the revelation of God for the Church. From his writing, he was a prisoner of Christ, pastor, preacher, prophet, teacher, an evangelist and an apostle. Clearly, he did not frustrate the grace of God in his life (Galatians 2:21).

“Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit” (verses 4,5). The importance of the Spirit of God in the life and ministry of a Christian youth cannot be understated. It was through the Spirit of God that Paul received the revelation of the mystery of Christ. To fully enjoy our Christian life and ministry, we need the infilling and power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has a ministry to sinners, believers and the Church. He searches all hearts (John 16:8-11), convicts of sin (Acts 2:37), gives victory in temptation (Romans 8:26,27), helps in prayers (Luke 4:1,2,14), searches and reveals the deep things of God (1 Corinthians 2:9-12), empowers believers for service (Acts 1:8), guides into all truth (John 14:26), etc.

Question 2: *Why did God reveal the mystery of Christ to Paul?*

“That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel” (verse 6). God’s intent to reveal this mystery to Paul was: **(i)** to make the Gentiles fellow heirs with Christ (Ephesians 2:19; Galatians 3:26-29); **(ii)** to make the Gentiles part of the Church, the body of Christ (Ephesians

2:20-22; 4:15,16; 5:25-27,32); and (iii) to be partakers of His promises in Christ (Galatians 3:14,29). This great mystery was hidden from the Old Testament saints. In this dispensation, God appointed apostle Paul a minister of the gospel to the Gentile world to reveal this mystery. **“Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity”** (1 Timothy 2:7).

Today, the mystery of the gospel is still hidden from unsaved youths. Therefore, the great God in heaven is appointing all saved youths as soul-winners to reach out with the gospel to sinners in their schools, houses and everywhere (Ephesians 3:9; 6:19). However, to be an effective soul-winner like Paul, you must be prayerful and believe that the Lord who sent you will back you up.

RICHES OF THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST (Ephesians 3:8-13; Colossians 1:15-19,25-29; Mark 4:11; Romans 16:25)

“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ” (verse 8). Paul the apostle was a humble minister of God. He labored more abundantly than the rest of the apostles. Yet, he called himself **“the least of all saints”**. This was possible through the grace of God in him. **“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). The apostle’s call was to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ among the Gentiles.

Question 3: *What do you understand by “the unsearchable riches of Christ”?*

The unsearchable riches of Christ are eternal riches of God through Christ. They are those provisions and inheritance which are incorruptible and unfading in heaven. They are blessings and rewards which man may not see with mortal eyes or comprehend with human understanding. Simply, it is beyond human description. Some of the unsearchable riches of Christ as revealed in the Scriptures are the: **(1)** riches of His goodness (Romans 2:4); **(2)** riches of His

glory (Romans 9:23; Ephesians 1:18; 3:16; Colossians 1:27); **(3)** riches of His grace (Ephesians 1:7; 2:7); **(4)** riches of the full assurance of His understanding (Colossians 2:2); **(5)** riches of His mercy (Ephesians 2:4); **(6)** riches of His love (Romans 5:8); and **(7)** riches of His fullness (Colossians 1:19).

Question 4: *How can youths enjoy the unsearchable riches of Christ?*

Your perception of Jesus Christ determines the depth of the revelation you receive from God. All youths need scriptural revelation concerning Jesus Christ. He is the

- ✓ **A**dvocate for our sins,
- ✓ **B**eloved of the Father,
- ✓ **C**aptain of our salvation, our
- ✓ **D**eliverer and **D**efender,
- ✓ **E**mmanuel – God with us,
- ✓ **F**aithful Witness,
- ✓ **G**ood Shepherd,
- ✓ **H**ealer, our
- ✓ **I**ntercessor,
- ✓ **J**udge,
- ✓ **K**ing of kings,
- ✓ **L**ord of lords, the
- ✓ **M**ediator, the
- ✓ **N**ame above all names,
- ✓ **O**nly Begotten of the Father,
- ✓ **P**rince of peace,
- ✓ **Q**uickening Spirit,
- ✓ **R**ock of Ages,
- ✓ **S**avior,
- ✓ **T**eacher,

- ✓ **U**nsearchable Personality, the
- ✓ **V**ine, the
- ✓ **W**ord Personified, the
- ✓ **'X**press image of the Father,
- ✓ **Y**ours faithfully to every need and the
- ✓ **Zeitgeist*** of all ages. (**the defining spirit of a particular period of history*)

What a wonderful Man! He is Incomparable, Inexhaustible, Incomprehensible, Invisible and Immutable. Worship Him only.

“And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ” (verse 9). Paul the apostle knew the target of his ministry. From the above verse, the target was to reach all men for Christ and to bring them into fellowship with Him, the Creator of all things. Also, the eternal purpose of God through Christ is that everyone who knows Him by faith should have boldness and access to the Father (verses 11,12). What a privilege! The Apostle therefore did not allow his trials and tribulations to hinder him from seeing the glory that laid before him (verse 13). The same should be the focus of Christian youths facing persecution or any other challenge in life. **“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal”** (2 Corinthians 4:17,18).

REQUEST AND SUPPLICATION FOR SPIRITUAL MATURITY (Ephesians 3:14-21; 1:15-19; 2 Peter 3:18; 1 Peter 2:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13; 2 Thessalonians 1:3,11,12)

“For this cause, I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (verse 14). When Paul received the revelation of the unsearchable riches of Christ, he prayed

for the Ephesian believers to be filled with the fullness of God. For this lesson to have maximum benefits, every youth and youth leader should pray for the fullness of Christ and His unsearchable riches to be poured into our lives by God.

Question 5: *What were Paul's requests for the Ephesian believers?*

“That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man” (verse 16). The depth of these requests shows his love and desire for the children of God. He sacrificed his time and energy to pray for believers to attain to spiritual maturity in Christ. Christian leaders and workers must learn from him. The requests of Paul for the Ephesian believers were:

- (1) to grant them the riches of His glory (verse 16);
- (2) to strengthen them with might by the Spirit in the inner man (verse 16);
- (3) that Christ may dwell by faith in their hearts (verse 7);
- (4) that they may be rooted and grounded in the love of Christ (verse 17);
- (5) that they may be able to understand with all the saint's spiritual matters (verse 18); and
- (6) to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge (verse 19).

We all need these prayers and should also endeavor to pray same for our church. We must not allow the deceitfulness of sin in these last days to blind our eyes towards spiritual and eternal issues.

“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (verse 20). The answers to these prayers are certain. This is because of the promises that follow immediately that God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above what we ask or think. Therefore, we are to join the hosts of heaven to praise and worship the

almighty God for His wonderful works. **“Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen”** (verse 21).

LESSON 725

BELIEVERS' UNITY AND MINISTRY GIFTS

MEMORY VERSE: “Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3).

TEXT: Ephesians 4:1-16

The call and challenge to live like Christ is a great one for all believers in all generations. Paul the apostle, inspired by the Spirit of God, exhorted the believers in Ephesus to walk worthy of their calling. He reminded them that their calling was a high calling to follow, honour and glorify the Lord by the way they lived. This is the same calling for Christian youths today.

Question 1: *What is the purpose of our calling in Christ?*

We are called to walk worthy of His name. Our conduct, comportment and lifestyle should be in conformity with the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The call to a worthy walk is a call to conformity to the image of Christ, to live in holiness and righteousness. **“Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel”** (Philippians 1:27).

When we live like Christ, we will be in unity with the body of Christ. All gifts we receive from God will be used for building up His Church. **“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: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ”** (verses 11-13).

PROOFS OF THE CHRISTIAN GRACE (Ephesians 4:1-3; Philemon 9; Romans 12:1,2; Philippians 1:27; Acts 20:17-21; Colossians 3:12-15)

“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called” (verse 1). Paul was an apostle, a prophet, pastor, preacher, teacher and evangelist. Yet, he was a prisoner of the Lord Jesus. To be a prisoner of the Lord means to be a servant of the Lord. Such a person is ready to obey the Master’s command. It takes real conversion with humility, selflessness and commitment always. It is this servant of the Lord pleading and beseeching the believers to **“walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called”**.

Question 2: *What is the significance of our calling in the gospel?*

Our calling in the gospel is by the Lord Himself and is made effective by the Spirit of God. It is approved and sanctioned by the Father. The call is possible through the transforming power of the gospel. The significance of our calling is not an ordinary one, they include: **One**, we are called to be saints (Romans 1:7), therefore, our walk, behavior and lifestyle should match the calling of God in us. We should not walk like sinners any more but saintly. **Two**, it is a high calling (Philippians 3:14). The calling is from our heavenly Father to His children, whom He has made new creatures in Christ. It is higher than any other calling in the world. **Three**, it is a holy calling (2 Timothy 1:9). **Four**, it is a heavenly calling (Hebrews 3:1). **Five**, it is a calling to have fellowship with Christ and His Church (1 Corinthians 1:9).

Question 3: *What are the proofs of the Christian grace in our lives?*

“With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (verses 2,3). The proofs of the Christian grace or virtues in our lives include, **One**, walking in lowliness or humility. The Lord gives more grace to those who are lowly in heart. This grace is not restricted to selected youths but we are called

to **“be clothed with humility”** (1 Peter 5:5). **Two**, walking in meekness - This is the very nature of Christ, our Master. **“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls”** (Matthew 11:29). He is our model. Be like Him! **Three**, walking in longsuffering – As Christian youths, it is part of our calling to walk worthy of Christ by demonstrating longsuffering without complaining or being patient or enduring. **Four**, forbearing with one another. It is Christ-like character to forbear with one another when offended. Such a person will not be bitter or keep malice (Colossians 3:12,13). **Five**, loving one another – Love marks out a Christian youth from unsaved youths. Love is expressing godly affection in the situation of others and taking the right actions to render help to those who are suffering. **Six**, keeping the unity of the Spirit – Christian youths are not spoilers or dividers of good things. Therefore, let your presence and actions keep the fellowship united. **Seven**, having peace with others – Christian youths should live in peace with everyone around them. The Scripture says: **“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men”** (Romans 12:18).

PRINCIPLES FOR CHURCH UNITY AND GROWTH:
(Ephesians 4:4-6; Acts 2:41-47; Romans 12:4,5; Malachi 2:10)

Christ is the Head of the Church. The Church is the assembly of saved people. All believers belong to the body of Christ. This is called the universal or invisible Church, while the specific place believers gather to worship is called the visible church. **“For this cause, I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named”** (Ephesians 3:14,15). Youths should not just belong to the visible church without being a member of invisible Church. Salvation from sin is the entry qualification. As a member of the Church, it is our God-given responsibility to maintain her unity.

Question 4: *From our text, what are the scriptural ingredients that promote unity in the church?*

“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” (verses 4-6). Believers are one in Christ Jesus. From our text, our unity in the Church is made possible by these scriptural ingredients:

- (1) **One Body** (Romans 12:4,5; 1 Corinthians 12:12,13; Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 3:15). Our faith in Christ’s death, burial and resurrection make it possible to be baptized into one body – the Church. Although, we have many members but one body.
- (2) **One Spirit** (1 Corinthians 6:17; 12:13; Ephesians 2:18; Philippians 1:27). Our salvation is made possible through the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. Through Him, we have access to the Father. **“For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father”** (Ephesians 2:18). Therefore, we must be one.
- (3) **One Hope** (Acts 2:26; 24:15; Romans 5:2; 1 Corinthians 15:1; Galatians 5:5). Our hope is in Christ always. All believers should continue to have this hope till the end. This will keep us in unity since we are focusing in the same direction.
- (4) **One Lord** (1 Corinthians 8:6; Luke 6:46; Romans 12:11; 13:14; 1 Corinthians 1:7; Ephesians 5:17). Jesus Christ is the Lord of lords and King of kings. He is the Creator, Controller and Ruler. He has the final say concerning your life. Accepting Him as Lord and Savior implies that you permit Him to have absolute and total control over everything in your life. **“O LORD our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name”** (Isaiah 26:13). Do not allow other lords to rule you. It is not for your good.
- (5) **One Faith** (Jude 3; 2 Timothy 1:12,13). The faith here is the totality of the Christian faith. This is what the body of Christ believes. We are to be faithful to the word of God.

- (6) **One Baptism** (Romans 6:1-9; 1 Corinthians 12:12,13; Colossians 2:12). All believers are buried with Christ by baptism into His death. The consequence of this is that we are raised by the power of God to walk in the newness of life. **“Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life”** (Romans 6:4).
- (7) **One God** (1 Corinthians 8:6; 1 Timothy 2:5,6). There is only one Creator, who is God, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him, we exist. He has made Christ the Mediator between Him and us. We must worship Him only. **“Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen”** (1 Timothy 1:17).

PURPOSE OF CHRIST’S GIFTS (Ephesians 4: 7-16; Hebrews 3:1; Romans 12:3,6-8; 1:1; 11:13; 1 Timothy 2:7; 2 Timothy 4:5; Acts 21:8)

“But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (verse 7). Grace is unmerited favor from God to man through Christ Jesus. Gifts are spiritual endowment freely bestowed on the believers for divine purposes. It is dangerous to operate spiritual gifts without grace (Acts 19:13-19). For real children of God, they are given grace and gifts to function effectively and efficiently in His Church. **“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”** (Romans 12:3).

Question 5: *What are the gifts given to believers through God’s grace?*

“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). This Scripture gives us a list of gifts through the grace of God. Some of them are prophecy, administration, exhortation, giving, showing mercy, etc. In First Corinthians chapter twelve verses one to twelve, nine gifts of the Spirit are listed. We are to seek the Lord by faith to operate within the gifts bestowed on us.

Question 6: *From verse 11, mention some ministry gifts in the body of Christ.*

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers” (verse 11). From our text, the following ministry gifts are available in the church: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. The work of these ministers differs from one another. Also, it is God who appoints a believer into any of these offices. An apostle is a sent one from God. He is sent by God to declare His word to His people (Acts 26:15-19). The work of an apostle is confirmed by God through signs, wonders and mighty deeds. **“I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds”** (2 Corinthians 12:12).

A Bible based prophet is a person who acts as a spokesman of divine communication between God and men. A prophet declares and predicts the mind of God (Micah 3:8; Acts 3:19-26). The responsibilities of a true prophet of God include: **one**, to pray and intercede for the people (Genesis 20:7,17; Jeremiah 37:3; 42:1-4; 27:18); **two**, to preach or declare the word of God faithfully to the people (Jeremiah 23:28; Micah 3:8; Acts 21:8,9); **three**, to lead the people of God in the way of obedience to the word of God and holiness (Micah 3:3-5); **four**, to direct the people of God from danger (2 Kings 6:8-12); **five**, to bring back backslidden people to God (Judges 6:7-10); **six**, to give the knowledge of salvation to the people (Luke 1:76-

78; 2:36-38); **seven**, to lead people in the way of God (Psalm 77:20); **eight**, to exhort and confirm the saints in the Lord (Acts 15:32); **nine**, to perfect and edify the saints (Ephesians 4:11-14); and, **ten**, to bring solutions from God to the challenges in people's life (1 Kings 17:8-24; 2 Kings 5:1-4,13,14; 7:1,2,18-20; Acts 11:27-30).

An evangelist is a minister with the power of God to direct and lead sinners to Christ as their Lord and Savior. Philip, one of the seven men of honest report that was appointed to distribute food, later became an evangelist (Acts 21:8). A pastor is the shepherd of the church who takes care of the spiritual and physical welfare of the sheep. He must be tender, loving and compassionate (1 Thessalonians 2:1-8).

A teacher of the word of God is a person who teaches, expounds, explains, interprets, applies and presents clearly and correctly the word of God to the people of God in a balanced manner (Ezra 7:6,10; Nehemiah 8:1-8). Today, the church needs the teachers from God to declare His word without favor and fear. Timothy was instructed to **"teach and exhort"** (1 Timothy 6:2), commanded to teach (1 Timothy 4:11), appoint leaders who are **"apt (able) to teach"** (1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 2:24), commit to faithful men **"who shall be able to teach others also"** (2 Timothy 2:1,2) and women were to be **"teachers of good things"** (Titus 2:3). Also, in the teaching ministry, God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are involved (Exodus 4:12; 28:26; Ephesians 4:20,21; Luke 12:12). Prophet Isaiah reveals the plan and purpose of God. **"... I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go"** (Isaiah 48:17). The duties of a teacher from God include to: ensure the people understand His word (Nehemiah 8:7), explain distinctly the word of God (Nehemiah 8:8), teach with the wisdom of God (Colossians 1:28), develop and mature saints (Ephesians 4:11-14), teach all the counsel of God (Matthew 28:20), show the way to the people on how to walk with God and work for God (Exodus 18:20), and diligence in the things of the Lord (Acts 18:24-28).

Question 7: *Why do we have different ministries in the church?*

“For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (verse 12). The purpose of God in appointing ministers into different ministries are: **(i)** to perfect the saints; **(ii)** for the work of the ministry; **(iii)** to edify the body of Christ; **(iv)** for the unity of the Church; **(v)** to bring believers into spiritual maturity; **(vi)** to prevent backsliding; and **(vii)** to prepare believers for heaven. The Bible says: **“And say to Archippus, take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it”** (Colossians 4:17). It is our duty to discover and develop the gifts of God in us to function properly in the body of Christ (1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6). As you minister, **“[endeavor] to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”** (verse 3). Therefore, be a positive agent of good change in the fellowship where you are.

LESSON 726

VISION FOR MISSION

MEMORY VERSE: “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

TEXT: Acts 16:1-15

The need for vision for missions is great in the Church today. A church without a vision is a church without a mission. Hence, it is important that youths in the church be filled with vision to be able to lead the lost to the good news of salvation.

Question 1: *Why do we need vision for missions today?*

We need vision for mission today to enable the church and all its members, including youths, concentrate on an important mission of the church, which is evangelism. Also, the church needs an awareness of the need for her to be a missionary church. The work of the church is not restricted to its immediate environs. It extends to “**all the world**”. Jesus died for the whole world and the gospel is for the Greeks, the Jews as well as the Barbarians. God wants us to reach all children, young people and adults in all nations. He expects converts from “**all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues**” (Revelation 7:9).

Question 2: *What place should missionary outreach occupy in the youth ministry of the church?*

The church should be a missionary church. God expects every Christian youth to be involved with home and foreign missions. The church should be a witness of the saving power of Christ all over the world. The Christian faith is born out of missions, spread through missions and advanced through missions. There are two kinds of mission – home and foreign. The home mission is preaching the gospel in the immediate community, while foreign mission is going to other nations to preach the gospel. For foreign missions, youths are expected to give from their resources

whenever announcement is made in the church to support missionaries since it is not all of us that can physically get involved in foreign outreaches.

CHRIST'S GREAT COMMISSION (Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:19; Acts 9:15; 26:16,17)

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations ... Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature... ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8). Central to the ministries in the Bible is missions. A cross-cultural ministry to people in their own cultural and geographical setting. Mission is central to the charge of the Lord, generally called the Great Commission. The Church is commanded to preach the gospel to all creatures regardless of their tribe, tongue, social status, religion, age, school, class, color, language and background.

Question 3: *What is the command of Christ to His Church on mission?*

God does not recognize or operate within national boundaries. He commands the Church to seek the lost both far and near. The Lord, before His ascension, was deeply concerned for His sheep who were outside the fold. He looked ahead to a fold composed of all peoples, races and tongues under one Shepherd. Paul, a man of no mean commitment evinced a missionary spirit when he said: **“I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel ... at Rome also”** (Romans 1:14,15). Today, there are “Macedonian calls” from Africa, America, Europe, Asia and Australia. And the Lord is saying, **“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”** (Isaiah 6:8).

Many mission outreaches today concentrate efforts on the adults while neglecting the youths. This is wrong and does not connote obedience to the Great Commission of preaching to all. Jesus Christ said **“... Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven”** (Matthew 19:14). Youths are

therefore, expected to work with the church in ensuring that all youths across the world are brought to the saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE CHURCH'S FOCUS ON MISSION (Acts 10:9-22,34,35; 13:1-3; 15:40,41; Galatians 2:8)

The Lord, in the early Church showed His commitment to missions. He sent principal workers or key leaders out on missions. Paul's call and commission portray a strong interest for missions. Right from his conversion, the Lord unequivocally directed his mission to the conversion of the Gentiles. **"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". "But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee"** (Acts 9:15; 26:16,17).

Paul was sent as a missionary to the Gentiles. The call was revitalized when later, an angel of God appeared to him in a dream and directed him to go to Macedonia and there preach the gospel to them (Acts 16:10). Apostle Peter, one of the pillars of the early Church also had a missionary call. Though he exclusively spent his life and ministry among the Jews, the Lord appeared to him in a vision and directed him to a Gentile community in Caesarea, the house of Cornelius.

Christ, in His post-resurrection manifestation, displayed great burden for souls outside His immediate geographical environment. He sent the Church not only to Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria but also to the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8). When the Holy Spirit spoke to the Antioch church and asked for the separation of Saul and Barnabas, it was for the purpose of mission. Paul was essentially burdened for the churches scattered all over the Gentile world and he mentioned this, time and again. The un-evangelized are yearning for an opportunity to hear the gospel message. The field is ripe and ready for harvest.

Over two thousand years after Jesus has shed His blood, billions of people are still in darkness. We cannot afford to delay or avoid the preaching of the gospel while lives are being lost. That would be costly.

Missions require sacrifice. As heaven bound saints who know the worth of souls that die in sin, we should give all we can to reach all souls including youths. The communists, for example, do not shrink from making great personal sacrifices in the light of their perceived assured future victory. They believe that they are seeking the good of mankind and therefore, they are prepared to sacrifice anything for the realization of their ambition. What a challenge!

Question 4: How can a Christian youth sacrifice for missions?

There are various ways we can sacrifice for missions. We could intercede for nations. To be able to understand the challenge which the various nations are facing especially as it affects the evangelization of souls, youths could read the papers or check the church websites for information. In addition, youths could donate unused cloths, books and various other materials to be given to the poor in mission fields. These would be useful in penetrating some of these nations. Youths could also save from their pocket money or gifts and donate for missions. A truly spiritual church generally sees beyond her local communities. The Scripture clearly teaches that the gospel message should be taken to the whole world. Every recipient of the redemptive grace of God is indebted to those who are yet to be evangelized. “Saved to serve” should be the slogan of every member of the church.

PLANNING FOR MISSION (Acts 11:22-27; 13:1-3; 16:15)

The program for missions need to be carefully planned and wisely executed. To ensure that the mission work is not relegated, there is need for a comprehensive and vigorous missionary strategy in every church. A good proportion of the church’s fund should be expended on missions.

CALL TO MISSION (Acts 13:1-3; 16:9,10; 11:22-26; 2 Corinthians 5:20; 2 Timothy 4:5; Matthew 4:19; Mark 1:17)

“And he saith unto them, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19).

Question 5: *How can a believing youth receive the call to the mission field?*

Youths who are genuinely saved may receive God's direct call to the mission field like Paul the apostle. **“And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them”** (Acts 16:9,10). However, when a youth is called by the Lord early in life, the Lord expects him or her to be properly trained and matured before embarking on missions. This training would include proper education, proper upbringing at home and church and maturing to become an adult legally qualified to take certain decisions. Timothy, Daniel and our Lord Jesus Christ were properly prepared before they started their ministries. Youths are expected to emulate them.

Another method of receiving a missionary call is through the church leadership. The Lord can speak to the church thereby directing the persons that are to go to the mission field. Beside personal revelation and the Spirit's leading through Church leadership, one can have a persistent desire for or conviction about being called to the mission field. God can use any of these methods to call us to the mission field.

Question 6: *What are the consequences of neglecting mission?*

The commitment to missions cannot be traded off. The Lord cannot tolerate a church that despises mission. There are grave consequences for neglect of missions. Jonah typifies one who neglected missions. He had no compassion for souls beyond his national borders. But

God insisted on a missionary outreach to the over one hundred and twenty thousand souls in Nineveh. God showed Jonah that if he would go out on missions, the heathen will repent and turn to the Lord. But Jonah openly refused to go at first. A whale swallowed him and spewed him out after three days. Today, God frowns at the church or ministers who drag their feet or refuse out rightly to be involved in missions. The neglect of missions attracts the frown of God and unanswered prayers.

To faithfully carry out the work of missions, the church should be committed to a consistent systematic and well-rounded missionary program. God will bless the church that has a world-wide vision towards reaching millions of people on the mission fields. Will you, like Isaiah, say: **“Here am I; send me”**? (Isaiah 6:8).

LESSON 727

FOLLOW-UP AND DISCIPLESHIP

MEMORY VERSE: “And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do” (Acts 15:36).

TEXT: Acts 14:21-28; 15:35,36,41

The Great Commission consists of evangelism and follow-up. The command from Christ to all believers is to, “**Go ye therefore, and teach all nations...**” (Matthew 28:19,20). The expression means to go and make disciples of all nations. Hence, the Great Commission does not end with winning souls but continues with training converts through follow-up till they become disciples. This entails them being matured enough to stand and teach others. Therefore, the Great Commission demands that the new converts should be nourished and trained in Scriptures until they are established in the faith and fully integrated into the body of Christ.

Question 1: *What is follow-up?*

Follow-up has been described as the conservation, maturation and multiplication of the fruit of evangelism through consistent exposure to the truth of God’s word. It is also the care from a spiritual parent to the new converts with the aim of bringing them to spiritual maturity and fruitfulness.

PURPOSE AND PRACTICE OF DILIGENT FOLLOW-UP: (Matthew 28:19,20; Acts 15:36; 14:21,22; Mark 3:14; Philippians 2:19-22; 1 Thessalonians 3:10).

“**And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do**” (Acts 15:36). The purpose and practice of scriptural and diligent follow-up by soul-winners cannot be over-emphasized.

Question 2: *What are the importance of follow-up?*

For new Christians to attain spiritual maturity and fruitfulness, follow-up will be necessary for the following reasons: **(1)** Nourishment (John 21:15) – The new converts need to be nourished with the word of God. It is the responsibility of the soul-winner to feed the lambs of Christ. **(2)** Protection (John 10:10,12) – The new converts need protection from false teachers and preachers. **(3)** The new converts need encouragement during persecution and difficult times because of their decision to serve the Lord (Acts 14:21,22). **(4)** Although most of the converts' questions may sound immature to mature believers, soul-winners should be around to answer and guide them as they need instructions on basic Christian principles (1 Corinthians 8:1-13). **(5)** The converts need training on the fundamentals of the Christian faith and how to develop good Christian habits (Proverbs 22:6). **(6)** Intercessory prayer (Luke 23:31,32; Colossians 1:3,4,9-11). Personal intercession is an aspect the soul-winner should not overlook. Prayers must be offered without ceasing for them. Paul's letters to the Thessalonians reveal the importance he placed on personal intercession (1 Thessalonians 1:2; 3:10). **(7)** Fellowship (Acts 2:42) – The new converts need fellowship of the body of Christ. Hence, they are to be integrated into the church for worship.

Jesus Christ, our Master, Lord and the greatest Soul-winner evolved the best follow-up method. He kept the converts with Him for a period of three and a half years and taught and prayed for them. By that, He teaches us that after conversion, the soul-winner must continue to teach, pray for, encourage and demonstrate the Christian lifestyle before the new converts. The soul-winner should also supervise the new converts to ensure that they do not derail, while making sure that they become productive in the Kingdom of God.

Question 3: *Mention different methods for effective follow-up?*

“But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto

you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us” (1 Thessalonians 2:7,8). The following methods can be used for effective follow-up.

One, Personal Contact – This is one of the most effective ways of establishing new converts. The closer the soul-winner is to the converts, the closer they are to safety.

Two, Prayer – Intercessory prayer was another method adopted by the early Church (1 Thessalonians 1:2-6; 3:10). Paul the apostle spent much time interceding for new converts. A man of God once said that “it is better to spend ten minutes praying for new believers every day than to spend one hour praying for them in their crisis situation”.

Three, representatives of the soul-winner could be sent to follow-up new converts where the soul-winner is not able to personally have a personal contact (1 Corinthians 4:17; Philippians 2:19-24; 1 Corinthians 4:17; Philippians 2:19-24). In the case of Paul, the apostle, when he was unable to personally visit new believers, he sent a trusted representative, like Timothy, to help him do the necessary follow-up.

Four, correspondence (writing letters) to new converts to encourage, teach, warn and guide them was a method adopted for follow-up in the New Testament (Acts 15:20,23-29; 2 Corinthians 13:10; 2 Peter 3:1; Luke 1:3,4).

We can carry this out through email, text messaging, etc. This method is appropriate where distance tends to serve as a barrier. As natural parents are responsible for loving, feeding, protecting and training their children until they reach the age of maturity, so it is with spiritual parents. As soon as the salvation of the convert is ascertained, he must be taught the importance of water baptism. Also, follow-up should progress on the wheels of visitation and caring. Therefore, our visitation must be purposeful and goal-oriented. Some of these **goals** are:

(1) the soul-winner must teach the convert that his sins are forgiven by God, if he has sincerely repented and accepted Jesus Christ by faith (1 John 1:9; Romans 8:16).

(2) The convert must be taught how to live a new life and

imbibe the principles of spiritual growth which are in the word of God (Matthew 4:4; 1 Peter 2:1-3).

(3) The convert should be guided on how to maintain personal, private devotion (Quite Time) everyday (Mark 1:35; Joshua 1:8). A copy of the Bible should be made available to him for this purpose.

(4) The converts should be encouraged to share their testimonies with others regularly (Mark 5:19; John 1: 40-46; 4:28-30).

(5) The converts should also be encouraged to attend school fellowships and the weekly meetings regularly (Hebrews 10:25; Acts 2:42-47).

PERCEPTION AND PRINCIPLES OF DISCIPLESHIP AND FELLOWSHIP (Matthew 28:19,20; 16:24; Luke 14:25-33)

Shallow spiritual life and low standard of Christian living are the products of inadequate biblical teachings today. A young convert may be unwilling to bear anything that will cause pains. But when he becomes mature enough as a disciple, he knows how to bear his cross and follow Christ because he has learnt of Him. He waits on the Lord and prays that the will of the Lord be done in his life.

Question 4: *Who is a disciple?*

A disciple is a believer who learns the basic principles of Christian standards. **“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls”** (Matthew 11:29). Having on us the yoke of the Lord means that we are to allow God to control our lives for the benefit of the Kingdom. Therefore, to become a disciple, you must consecrate all to God. New converts are not to remain babes forever. They are to grow into maturity in spiritual things. Hence, the Great Commission demands that a young Christian be trained in basic spiritual concepts to bring stability into his spiritual life and fruitfulness to his Christian service. A model life lived in accordance with sound doctrines is the secret of a strong, stable and steadfast Christian life. This is how a Christian can be created in righteousness

and true holiness; and rooted and established in the faith (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 2:7).

Question 5: *What are the principles of true discipleship?*

As a disciplined student of the Lord, there is a lot for the new convert to learn from Christ. Discipleship makes demands on the disciple. He is to prefer God and his relationship with Christ to other things. He possesses a greater love for God and His word than any advice from people. He prefers God's work and worship to even his family tie. As an obedient student, he is studious and excels in his examinations without compromising his stand as a believer. There is no selfishness in him but total consecration to and affection for Christ.

A true disciple is completely submitted to the Lordship of Christ (Matthew 16:24; Philippians 3:7; Galatians 2:20). He has a willingness to forgo pleasure, possession or position in life if they threaten to dethrone Christ and exalt self. He does not meddle with things that becloud thoughts and hope for heaven; neither does he participate in activities that promote self above spiritual matters. A disciple endures the cross in the form of ridicule, persecution, abuse and bears every difficulty without complaining if it is for the glory of God (Luke 9:23). Again, the disciple consistently follows in Christ's footsteps (Luke 9:23; John 4:34; 5:30; 7:18; 8:29,31).

PROFIT AND PERSEVERANCE DURING FOLLOW-UP
(2 Timothy 3:15-17; 2:1,2; Acts 11:25,26)

Follow-up and discipleship training have multiplier effect in church planting. They equip members for the task of world evangelization. Our efforts to reach the lost will be mere day-dreaming without serious consideration for follow-up and discipleship development. Only serious-minded and committed disciples can accept the responsibilities of the Great Commission.

Question 6: *What are the benefits of follow-up and discipleship?*

Consistent follow-up will lead to the multiplication of disciples. For example, if each of us wins a soul for Christ

and trains the convert to go and win another soul every six months, in few years' time, we would have evangelized our community. John the Baptist led Andrew to Christ (John 1:35-40); Andrew in turn led Peter to Christ (John 1:40-42) and Peter at Pentecost led about 3,000 souls to Christ (Acts 2:37-41) and those converts of Peter led multitudes to Christ (Acts 11:19-21). It is only when we get to heaven that we will be able to ascertain the number of converts that came into the Kingdom through the ministry of John the Baptist.

The mission of multiplication and evangelization can only be realized through the vision of disciple-making. Paul the apostle, in his missionary endeavors, exemplified the challenge of discipleship and breakthrough in evangelism (Acts 19:9,10). Spiritual training is a life-long process. After the disciple has been integrated to the service of the Lord, this should not be an end. Further training for constant improvement will be necessary. This calls for consistency and perseverance on the part of the trainers.

LESSON 728

THE GREAT TRIBULATION AND THE ANTICHRIST

MEMORY VERSE: “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matthew 24:21).

TEXT: Matthew 24:14-30; Daniel 9:24-27; Revelation 6:1-17; 13:1-18

The teaching on the Great Tribulation and the Antichrist is an important event in the study of the last days events known as “Eschatology”. It will lead to the Second Coming of Christ, which is the second part of His coming.

Question 1: *Why is it necessary to study the period of the Great Tribulation since Christian youths will not partake in it?*

The study of the Great Tribulation is important to believers because, firstly, it is to give warning on the sufferings that await careless Christian youths. Secondly, it will move youths to rise and rescue the perishing boys and girls around them. Thirdly, it enables Christian youths to prepare daily and diligently for the rapture of the sanctified saints. The question for all youths today is, do you want to face the Great Tribulation or go in the rapture?

Question 2: *In your own words, what is the Great Tribulation?*

The Great Tribulation is a period of unparalleled sufferings, woes and destruction. It is a time of universal trouble, yet it will center upon Jerusalem and Palestine. It will be the climax of God’s judgment upon the whole world. This period is the time when God’s wrath and judgment will fall upon the earth. It is also a time when Satan and the Antichrist will unleash¹ woe and wickedness upon the inhabitants of the earth (Revelation 6:2-9).

PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE GREAT TRIBULATION: (Matthew 24:14-20; Daniel 9:24-27; Jeremiah 30:7; 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12)

The period of the Great Tribulation falls within Daniel's seventieth week. Daniel's prophecy spans a period of seventy weeks. In Scripture, a week stands for seven years (Genesis 29:27,28). Therefore, a week in Daniel's prophecy means seven years. Daniel's seventy weeks means four hundred and ninety years.

Question 3: *Identify the three periods in Daniel's seventy weeks?*

The seventy weeks of Daniel's prophecy is divided into three. (1) 7 sevens or 49 years is for the rebuilding of Jerusalem (Daniel 9:25). (2) 62 sevens or 434 years is from the completion of the building to the time the Messiah is revealed (Daniel 9:26). (3) The last one week is the seventieth (70th) week, that is, the Great Tribulation period (Daniel 9:27).

Daniel's prophecy concerning the seventy weeks shows the accuracy and correctness of Biblical revelations. In the first seven weeks or 49 years, Jerusalem was reconstructed. After the next sixty-two weeks or 434 years, the Messiah was cut off (died or crucified). Again, it was prophesied that the people of the (wicked) prince shall come and destroy the city of Jerusalem. This happened in A.D. 70 when the Romans soldiers under the leadership of General Titus invaded Jerusalem. overall, sixty- nine weeks were to cover between the period of the edict to rebuild Jerusalem and the first advent (coming) of the Messiah. This prophecy was exactly fulfilled.

Sixty-nine weeks out of Daniel's seventy weeks have been fulfilled while the last week or seventieth week is yet to be fulfilled. The age in which we live now is known as the Church Age. This age covers between the time of the Messiah's cut off (sixty-nine weeks) and the Rapture.

It is important to note that the Church age was not directly predicted in the Old Testament. The Scripture calls it a mystery (Ephesians 3:5,6; 5:32; Colossians 1:25-27). It was hidden from the people in the Old Testament.

There are many prophecies in the Old Testament that predicted the two advents (comings) of Christ without throwing any light on the Church age (Zechariah 9:9,10; 12:10-14; Isaiah 9:6; 7:14; 26:19-21). However, this does not make the Church age less significant. This age is significant in the mind of God and it is known to Him from the foundation of the world (Acts 15:18). During this Church age, God will bring His programs with the Church into fulfillment which will end at the time of the Rapture. However, His program with Israel will continue until the end of the Great Tribulation. Note that the Church will not partake in the Great tribulation. Therefore, the Church age will usher in Daniel's seventieth week. In other words, the Rapture will usher in the period of the Great Tribulation and the reign of the Antichrist. **"For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders"** (2 Thessalonians 2:7-9).

Question 4: What lessons can we learn from the exact fulfillment of Daniel's prophecies?

The prophecy concerning the rapture will certainly come to pass since all the prophecies concerning Christ's first coming have been fulfilled.

THE PERIOD OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION (Matthew 24:21-26; Revelation 6:1-17; 13:1-18; Isaiah 26:20,21; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12)

The period of the Great Tribulation will be the darkest hour in human history. The man of sin will be allowed to do his worst before God's day of holiness, righteousness and glory comes. The Lord will catch away His people before the Great Tribulation begins. The Church will not pass through the Great Tribulation period. **"Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be over past. For, behold, the LORD**

cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain" (Isaiah 26:20,21). God will not allow His children to suffer during the period of the suffering, judgment and destructions. He saved Noah (a preacher of righteousness) and his family before destroying the world with flood (Genesis 6:8-10; 7:1-13,16- 24; 8:15-22). He rescued Lot and his family before destroying Sodom and Gomorrah with fire (Genesis 19:10- 29). He preserved the children of Israel in Egypt while there was judgment on the Egyptians (Exodus 8:20-24; 9:22-26; 10:21-23; 11:4-7). So, will God take away His children before the Great Tribulation (1 Thessalonians 4:13- 18).

The Great Tribulation will last for a period of seven years. At the beginning of the seven-year tribulation period, the Antichrist will enter into covenant with Israel. In the middle of the period, he will break the covenant (Daniel 12:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-11), then, the Great Tribulation will start in earnest. The beast will then persecute the Jews during the Great Tribulation period for three and half years.

The Great Tribulation is described as the **"...time of Jacob's trouble"** (Jeremiah 30:7), **"great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be"** (Matthew 24:21), **"...the day of the Lord"** (Joel 1:15), **"...A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness"** (Joel 2:2), **"...a day of wasteness and desolation"** (Zephaniah 1:14,15) and **"...a time of trouble"** (Daniel 12:1). Also, the period is described as full of woes, judgments, famines, bloody wars, explosions, terror, anguish¹, earthquakes, wrath, indignation², trial, destruction, darkness and punishment. It will be a time when everybody on the face of the earth, including youths, will be calling on the mountains to fall on them but it will not be possible (Revelation 6:15-17).

Question 5: *What is the purpose of the Great Tribulation?*

The purpose of the Great Tribulation is to make Israel suffer so that they can desire strongly and be ready to receive their Messiah (the Lord Jesus Christ whom they,

at present, reject) to come back to them. It is also to judge unbelieving people including youths of their evil ways (Zechariah 12:10,11; 13:1-13; 14:12,13).

Question 6: *Who is the Antichrist and what will be his activities during the Great Tribulation?*

The Antichrist, also called the beast, the king of the north, the man of sin, the prince that shall come, a king of fierce countenance, the son of perdition and that wicked one empowered personally by Satan, shall bring destruction on the people during the Great Tribulation (2 Thessalonians 2:1-10; Revelation 13:1-18; 14:9-11). Furthermore, the false prophets and the devil will also bring terrors on the earth (Revelation 16:2-12; 19:20).

During the Great Tribulation, no one will be able to buy, sell or earn a living without accepting the mark of Antichrist. All will submit themselves before him in wonder of the great miracles he is going to perform. The great tribulation will be a time of intense persecution for Israel and those who will stand for God and against the Beast. The Antichrist will be the great personality behind the Great Tribulation. **“And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority”** (Revelation 13:2). Anybody who accepts the mark of the beast (666) will be lost forever (Revelation 13:18).

PREPARATION TO ESCAPE THE GREAT TRIBULATION:
(Matthew 24:12-14, 27-30; 25:1-13; Mark 13:31-37)

The sufferings of the Great Tribulation period will be so great that no believer should pray to go through it. However, the Bible teaches that backslidden and careless believers who would miss the rapture will go through the Great Tribulation. Although, the Great Tribulation saints will eventually be saved, they will have to endure untold sufferings. **“... And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”** (Revelation 7:14).

While terrors are unleashed on the earth, saints will be receiving rewards (1 Corinthians 3:11-15), rejoicing and feasting at the Marriage Supper in heaven (Revelation 19:6-9), worshipping God with the angels (Revelation 7:9-17) and preparing for the Second Advent with Christ (Revelation 19:11-14).

True believers will not be present on the earth when the Beast arises in full terror of his satanic dictatorship. We are not looking for the coming of the Antichrist but the coming of Christ. The end of the world is at hand. When sin has run its course, when mankind's cup of iniquity has become full, when Satan has done his worst, then God will unleash fiery judgment on all workers of iniquity and the kingdoms of this world will become the Kingdom of our God.

Question 7: What steps should sinners, backsliders and saved youths take to escape the Great Tribulation?

The sinners, backsliders and saints are called to prepare for this great event. The sinners and backsliders are to repent and come to Christ before the day of the Lord. The saints are called to be ready, holy, spotless, watchful, prayerful and busy preaching the gospel until Christ comes. Youths, this is the time to prepare for the rapture.

LESSON 729

SAMUEL REPROVES ISRAEL

MEMORY VERSE: “And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart” (1 Samuel 12:20).

TEXT: 1 Samuel 12:1-25

The life of Samuel should interest and challenge Christian youths of our time. This is because he was born into a godly home but grew among corrupt youths. He lived to the glory of God and the praise of his parents. He was not influenced or corrupted by evil association. In addition, he was a child consecrated to the Lord from childhood. He was personally committed to God and His service. In this chapter, we see him asking Israel to assess his walk and work with them. **“Behold, here I am: witness against me before the LORD, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you”** (verse 3). No one could accuse him of any misconduct. This should challenge you!

Question 1: *How can Christian youths live like Samuel today?*

Samuel was dedicated to the Lord from childhood. When he became mature, he did not rebel against his mother's decision. He embraced it and remained faithful to the Lord. He also made up his mind to honour his parents and God. Therefore, he did not do anything that could bring reproach to himself, his family and God. He was also committed and dedicated to Eli. Christian youths should endeavor to follow this example. Therefore, the Christian youths should live in the fear of God and take a personal decision to follow the Lord and not follow the multitude to do evil. Also, in our text, Samuel challenged the children of Israel to serve the Lord and not forsake Him.

SAMUEL REQUESTS ISRAEL TO ASSESS HIS ACTS: (1 Samuel 12:1-5; 1 Timothy 3:7; Acts 23:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:9,10; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Revelation 22:12)

After Samuel had anointed Saul king over Israel as the Lord commanded, he made some important points to them.

Question 2: *Mention some facts raised by Samuel at Gilgal.*

One, he asked Israel to assess him. Personally, he was not pleased with their attitude in demanding for a king. God had been judging them righteously through him. Moreover, He has been their King from inception and led them faithfully. Two, he relayed to them God's past mighty acts. He reminded them of God's deliverances when they were oppressed. Three, he rebukes them of their foolish acts. His aim in doing this was to instill in them and their king the fear of God.

Samuel asked them if they had found fault in him during his service. As a youth leader or officer, can you demand for your assessment in your dealings with fellow believers? Can you do the same in your office, school and neighborhood? Are you not found wanting in your relationship with opposite gender and handling people's or church's money? No one could witness against Samuel. **"And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand"** (verse 4). God's expectation from all believers in our dealings with one another and handling the things of the Lord is that we **"must have a good report of them which are without"** (1 Timothy 3:7). Above the witness of man, Jesus is also a witness to all our acts. He watches over our actions and says, **"...behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be"** (Revelation 22:12). Therefore, examine yourself today and do not delay to make amends if your walk and work is faulty.

SAMUEL REHEARSES GOD'S ACTS TO ISRAEL (1 Samuel 12:6-15; Micah 6:1-5; Psalm 78:12-30; Deuteronomy 28:15; Acts 7:30-36)

“And Samuel said unto the people, It is the LORD that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt” (verse 6). Samuel took Israel back to Egypt as he rehearsed to them God’s mighty works. He made known to them that God raised Moses and Aaron as instruments to deliver them from bondage. Indeed, He wrought wondrously through these men to make Himself known among all nations as the invisible¹ mighty King. Samuel wanted them to know that he did not chose himself as a priest and prophet of the Lord, but God chose him. As they rejected him, by implication, they rejected God from being their Leader. Today, God is still the One who chooses leaders in His Church. No youth should reject or look down on any leader. They should pray for them. Also, Samuel reminded them of the past and present acts of God.

Question 3: *Mention some deliverances God did for Israel.*

“Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the LORD of all the righteous acts of the LORD, which he did to you and to your fathers” (verse 7). Beside Israel’s deliverance from Egypt, God delivered them from those who oppressed them several times. As they forsook Him and went into idolatry many times, the Philistines oppressed them. When they cried to Him, He **“sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered [them] out of the hand of [their] enemies on every side, and [they] dwelled safe”** (verse 11). However, as Naash, king of Ammon rose against them, instead of calling and trusting God for deliverance, they demanded for a human king.

Question 4: *What was the implication of Israel’s demand for a king?*

The implication of Israel’s request for a king was that they rejected God’s leadership over them. This means, whenever they had challenge from neighboring nations, they would run to their king for deliverance instead of God – the mighty Man in battle. It is unfortunate that there are believers who do the same. Whenever they have any

challenge, they run to so-called men or women of God for prayer instead of seeking for God's help. These men and women have taken the place of God in their lives. **“Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD”** (Isaiah 31:1).

Samuel had a purpose for rehearsing these acts of God. He wanted Israel and their king to learn how to seek God in the day of trouble. He wanted them to know that man is limited in power, only through God would they have the needed victories. He also wanted them to know the nature of God. He emphasized that continuous obedience to His command guarantees God's intervention (verses 14,15).

SAMUEL REBUKES ISRAEL FOR THEIR FOOLISH ACTS: (1 Samuel 12:16-25; Hebrews 12:5-11; Acts 7:49-54; Revelation 3:19)

“Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the LORD will do before your eyes” (verse 16). For them to realize the gravity of what they had done, Samuel called on God to make His displeasure known to them through a frightful incidence. **“So, Samuel called unto the LORD; and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel”** (verse 18). After God sent thunder and heavy rainfall that day, they came to Samuel to pray for God's mercy and forgiveness.

Question 5: *What was Samuel's counsel to Israel after their commitment to obey God?*

“And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart” (verse 20). After repentance, there is need for continuity in obedience to God. Therefore, he admonished them not to turn aside from following Him. He warned them not to follow vain things that cannot profit or deliver them (verse 21). He made it known that once that was done, the Lord will not forsake them. He made a commitment on his part to keep praying for them. **“Moreover, as for**

me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way” (verse 23).

Question 6: *Why is prayer necessary in our consistent walk with God?*

Prayer is very essential in aiding us to walk consistently with God. It helps us to receive strength from Him for daily walk and grace needed to overcome the tempter. Prayer helps us to crucify the flesh, conquer the world and its allurements. Christian youths are admonished to pray always (1 Thessalonians 5:17). From the life of Samuel, we see the importance of leaders’ prayer for their followers. Youth leaders should never cease to pray for their youths. It is when we pray for them daily that Christ can be formed in them. **“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you”** (Galatians 4:19).

LESSON 730

SAUL DISOBEYS THE LORD

MEMORY VERSE: “And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now, would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel forever” (1 Samuel 13:13).

TEXT: 1 Samuel 13:1-23

Society demands obedience from its citizens to ensure personal and societal happiness. In like manner, God requires obedience for our present and eternal happiness. Therefore, God demands and expects man to obey Him. From Adam to the present time, He demands obedience from all. Disobedience to His revealed will attracts judgment. Adam and Eve disobeyed Him and were punished (Genesis 3:17-19). The generation of Noah disobeyed God and He consumed them with flood. Sodom and Gomorrah refused to walk in His way and they were consumed by fire and brimstones. In our text, Saul was directed by Samuel to wait for him but he was impatient and went ahead to offer burnt offering which was not his duty. Since every disobedience has recompense, he was rejected as king.

Question 1: *Why did Saul disobey despite Samuel's instruction?*

Saul gave reasons that led to his disobedience. These include delay of Samuel, his soldiers and advancement of his enemies. Fear led to impatience which led to disobedience, whereas, Samuel had earlier told them to fear the Lord only. **“If ye will fear the LORD, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you continue following the LORD your God: But if ye will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall the hand of the LORD be against**

you, as it was against your fathers” (1 Samuel 12:14,15). Excuses cannot turn disobedience to obedience; we must obey God at all cost.

ISRAEL’S BATTLE WITH THE PHILISTINES (1 Samuel 13:1-7; 17:19; 19:18; 23:5; Luke 14:31)

“Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel, Saul chose him three thousand men of Israel; whereof two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in mount Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin: and the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent” (1 Samuel 13:1,2). The major reason Israel demanded for a king was for someone to lead them to battle against their enemies. Judging from previous battles, the number of soldiers selected for this battle was grossly inadequate. The time when there is no battle is the best time to prepare for it. This would have given enough opportunity for spiritual, mental and physical preparation.

Question 2: What can we learn from Israel’s lack of preparation despite knowledge of battles around them?

Life is full of challenges. A Christian youth should not live a life of complacency. There must be adequate preparation and prayer for everything you do in life.

“And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear” (verse 3). As Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines, Saul knew he was in trouble and called Israel together to move them to war. The action of Jonathan attracted counter reaction from the Philistines. It provoked them into anger because Israel had fallen out of favor with them. Therefore, they came against Israel in battle. The question is, was Israel really prepared for war? Will they be able to match the strength of the army of the Philistines with just three thousand soldiers? **“When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, (for the people were distressed,) then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and**

in high places, and in pits” (verse 6). Israel, a dreaded nation, was now in distress and they hid in thickets and rocks. This was not the case when Jehovah was their Captain and they were in right relationship with Him. The number of their soldiers would not have been the issue if they had been in the right relationship with God because He saves without consideration of number.

Question 3: *What can you learn from the situation confronting Israel at this time?*

The reality of Israel's rejection of Samuel and consequent demand for a king had begun to show. They became exposed and vulnerable without the help of God. Meanwhile, Jonathan had provoked the Philistines without thinking of the consequences and their lack of readiness for the battle. Israel was helpless and hapless! (Proverbs 3:5-7).

It is dangerous to scheme out of one's life. Christ admonishes believers: **“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. 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”** (John 15:4,5). The secret of spiritual strength, victory and preservation is in abiding with the Lord. It was ignorance and impatience that led Israel to this situation.

SAUL'S IMPATIENCE (1 Samuel 13:8-15; 15:10-26; Luke 18:1; Proverbs 2:11)

“And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed; but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him” (verse 8). Saul was informed to wait for seven days for Samuel to come and offer burnt offering before the commencement of the war (1 Samuel 10:8). Saul waited for seven days and Samuel had not come. As the army of the Philistines approached, the people scattered from him. Hence, he offered the sacrifice. What a trial! Sometimes, God tries our faith at a time of trouble. He wants to know if truly we trust Him (Genesis 22:2).

Question 4: *What is the danger of impatience?*

“And Saul said, bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering” (verse 9). Saul did not pass the test. He was impatient and prayerless. Had he reasoned within himself that Samuel was a conscientious leader, he would have waited. Had he remembered that God cares so much for His people and cannot abandon them in times of trouble, he would have waited. There are alternative actions he would have taken instead of disobedience. One, he could have prayed for God’s intervention at this time. Two, he could have encouraged himself in the Lord as David did (1 Samuel 30:6) of his army, and like Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:1-4).

Question 5: *What should Christian youths do when confronted with life’s challenges?*

In times of challenges as Christian youths, we should: One, understand that God is aware and He is with him. **“When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee”** (Isaiah 43:2). Two, when parents, friends and brethren abandon us, we should not be discouraged, but know that God has promised to be with us at such a time (Psalm 27:10). Three, we should always cultivate the habit of obeying God no matter the condition. Four, we should learn to pray before taking actions. Five, we should learn to be patient.

As soon as Saul offered the sacrifice, Samuel appeared. Impatience, distrust in God and fear made Saul fail. This can also affect you during trials. Saul was rejected as king over the kingdom. He suffered dearly for it later. The same can happen to careless Christian youths who do not take heed to God’s instructions.

ISRAEL’S HELPLESS SITUATION (1 Samuel 13:16-23; 16:14; 17:23,24; 31:1,2,7)

“And Saul, and Jonathan his son, and the people that were present with them, abode in Gibeah of Benjamin: but the Philistines encamped in Michmash. And the spoilers came out of the camp of the Philistines in

three companies: one company turned unto the way that leadeth to Ophrah, unto the land of Shual” (verses 16,17). Saul did not have the courage to approach the war after Samuel had rebuked him. He and Jonathan, the two key players in the army of Israel remained in Gilbeah. Ironically, it was the Philistines who did not know God who approached the battle with great courage and plan. They were set to spoil the entire land of Israel as they came in three companies. What a great strategy! They moved forward towards the place where the army of Israel abode and took possession of major escape routes.

Saul and Israel at this time were in an extreme situation. No smith was in sight to make them weapons of war. Without bows and arrows, they could not fight (verse 22). The only remedy for them would have been God’s intervention. But Saul had lost his relationship with God. He had lost both physical and spiritual defense. When a Christian youth loses his physical and spiritual weapons, he will experience defeat every day. Look inwards; are you putting on your weapons of spiritual warfare?

Question 6: Mention the weapons of warfare available for saved youths to fight spiritual battles of life.

“Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11). The weapons of warfare against the devil’s wiles available for believers’ use are: the truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, prayer and supplication in the Spirit (Ephesians 6:14-18). Check your life to ensure that you have all these weapons on. Lack of any of these weapons signifies the beginning of spiritual weakness.

Are you on the road to defeat? Check yourself!

LESSON 731

JONATHAN TRIUMPS OVER THE PHILISTINES

MEMORY VERSE: “And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few” (1 Samuel 14:6)

TEXT: 1 Samuel 14:1-52

Saul was anointed king over Israel by Samuel in chapter ten. He had his first battle in chapter eleven. After two years of his reign, he established his military of three thousand soldiers (1 Samuel 13:1,2). Jonathan, under his military regiment, also fought against the Philistines in that same chapter. Many of the Israelites who were in his army fled from him and just about six hundred that followed him were fearful.

In this chapter, Jonathan summoned courage, by the prompting of God, to attack the Philistines. That led to a great trembling among the enemies of Israel. Thereafter, the soldiers that followed Saul became courageous to attack. They beat down the Philistines. It takes the courage, boldness and fortitude of just one person, sometimes, to make great and positive impact in a community or a nation. That could be you.

CONQUEST THROUGH DIVINE GUIDANCE (1 Samuel 14:1-23; Numbers 25:6-8; Acts 20:22-24; 2 Timothy 4:7; 2 Chronicles 15:7; Isaiah 48:17)

“Now it came to pass upon a day, that Jonathan the son of Saul said unto the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over to the Philistines’ garrison, that is on the other side. But he told not his father” (verses 1). It is important to note that most of the soldiers that remained were with Saul where he **“tarried**

in the uttermost part of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree which is in Migron". Besides, he had **"Ahiah, the son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the LORD's priest in Shiloh, wearing an ephod"**. But with all these resources, physical and spiritual, he made no attempt to attack but **"tarried"**. But **"Jonathan was gone"** with only one **"young man that bare his armour"**, not even a fully trained soldier. Yet, he said: **"let us go over to the Philistines' garrison, that is on the other side"**.

Question 1: *What should be our attitude to God's work when others are slacking?*

We learn as Christian youths that when others are slacking from God's service, we should apply ourselves to it. We should not be discouraged by the inactivity of the majority or even that of the people we look up to as mentors. Our singular act of active and diligent service may spark up the flame of revival. Phinehas alone took a step that stayed the plague of destruction on Israel (Numbers 25:6-9). Even in our academics, the cold attitude that others develop towards diligent study, reading and practice should not discourage us from putting in our best.

In verses 4-6, the two rocks on both sides were like obstacles in his way, yet Jonathan firmly believed and was prompted in his spirit by that faith. His armour bearer was in support of him as he said, **"Do all that is in thine heart: turn thee; behold, I am with thee according to thy heart"** (verse 7).

Question 2: *What lessons can we draw from Jonathan and his armour-bearer when faced with obstacles?*

We should not allow the sight of danger or difficulties to hinder us from forging ahead to victory. We should unite in faith and confront the problems. Paul had many dangers ahead of him in the ministry but he was courageous to keep on fighting and at the end he said, **"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith"** (2 Timothy 4:7). Also, in our schoolwork, difficult subjects should not make us to quit. We can form a study group with the few who have the same focus on

excellence. In the midst of great oppositions, we should rise to the challenge and fight for the Lord. Jonathan, who was neither a priest nor a prophet, began to make prophetic utterances. **“Then said Jonathan, Behold, ... if they say thus, Come up unto us; then we will go up: for the LORD hath delivered them into our hand: and this shall be a sign unto us”** (verses 8-10). Beyond the confession of faith, he took the step of faith (verses 11-14).

Question 3: What are the benefits of following divine leading to perform a given task?

The result of this action of faith, following a divinely prompted leading, is that the Philistines **“fell before Jonathan; and his armour-bearer slew after him”**. That victory caused the enemies to tremble. God supported Jonathan by making the earth to quake (verses 14,15). At this point, it was discovered that Jonathan and his armour-bearer were the ones fighting the Philistines. Then Saul made attempt to talk to God, which he should have done before, but he was distracted by the noise of the battle and could not do it. He had no choice but to proceed into the activities of the warfare. This is how many believers miss out from their personal devotion. They do not pray before activities mount up, but wait until distractions begin. They have no choice but to proceed into the day’s activities without their quiet time. However, even the Israelites that had fled for refuge gained courage to join in the battle. **“So, the LORD saved Israel that day: and the battle passed over unto Bethaven”**. Victory is ours if we follow God’s leading and perform any task.

CONSEQUENCE OF FOLLOWING A DEFIANT LEADER:
(1 Samuel 14:24-46; 13:3,4; 18:5-9; Jeremiah 23:32; 1 Samuel 28:3-7)

A defiant is someone who is openly and deliberately disobedient. Saul had deviated from the commandment of God in the previous chapter. God had consequently rejected him. All he was doing now was in the flesh. Samuel did not pray for him about this battle because he had already offered the sacrifice himself against God’s word. Even the priest that was with him was rendered useless.

Then he began to make rules that did not come from God. Obviously, the rules were not God-ordained because the only one who did not observe it prospered in the battle and Saul only shared in that victory. As for others, they were distressed. **“And the men of Israel were distressed that day: for Saul had adjured the people, saying, Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies. So, none of the people tasted any food”** (verse 24).

The people were held in bondage of a king who was merely following his senses (verses 25,26). When we follow the rules of preachers and people who are not hinged on the word of God, the result is bondage. We will lose our blood-bought freedom in Christ. Jonathan, who did not know about the oath, ate and he was refreshed and became more reasonable (verse 27).

Question 4: *What should be our attitude to preachers whose rules and teachings are not based on the Scriptures?*

We should not follow any preacher who does not base his preaching on the Scriptures. If we do not feed our hearts with the junks of backslidden preachers, our faith will be strong and our spiritual senses will be sharper. **“Then said Jonathan, My father hath troubled the land: see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey”** (verse 29). We should pay attention to the teaching of ministers whose life and teaching allude to the word of God.

Saul’s oath was not motivated by God because it had no positive effect on the people who kept it and neither did it have a negative effect on the one who did not observe it. Those who kept it **“were very faint... [and] sin against the LORD, in that they eat with the blood”**. The directives of leaders who are not influenced by the Spirit of God will produce sinful acts in their followers.

For about two years of his reign, he had no serious interest in devotion to God. He had never built an altar until now. **“And Saul built an altar unto the LORD: the same was the first altar that he built unto the LORD.”** Even after

building the altar, he did not use it but was making plans to fight without consulting God. His followers who knew that he did things as he pleased told him: **“Do whatsoever seemeth good unto thee”** until the priest said, **“Let us draw near hither unto God”**. On the advice of the priest, **“Saul asked counsel of God... But he answered him not that day”**. That did not mean He will not answer him the following day. He had not developed regular communion with God, so it was hard for him to wait to hear from Him. It was this same lack of regular communion with the Lord that made him deflect¹ later to seek after a witch doctor. This is the same reason some people get frustrated later in life while seeking to know God’s will in marriage or other areas of life. While growing up, they never developed any intimate communion with God. They have not learnt how God speaks to them.

Instead of taking responsibility for his spiritual dryness, Saul blamed others. He concluded that he did not hear from God because someone must have sinned. He cast lot and God allowed the lot to fall on Jonathan to prove him wrong. Yet, he requested that his son must die. But all Israel prevailed on him that Jonathan must not die. They came out clear to say that Jonathan was the one through whom the victory which he shared came to Israel. That was one thing that did not go well with Saul because he always loved to claim the victory achieved by others (1 Samuel 13:3,4; 18:5-9). When he saw that he had lost the control of the people, he **“went up from following the Philistines: and the Philistines went to their own place”**.

CONTINUOUS FIGHTING FOR THE LAND OF ISRAEL:
(1 Samuel 14:47-52; 18:5-11; 19:1,10; 20:24-31)

There were continuous battles between Israel and her enemy-nations. Likewise, there is continuous battle between believers and Satan. In the Old Testament, their battles were physical, though with spiritual implications while believers’ battles are spiritual (Ephesians 6:12).

Question 5: What spiritual battles do Christian youths face today?

Since our battles are spiritual, we do not see our enemies with physical eyes. Therefore, the battle is against the devil and his agents. These can be in the form of failure, disappointment, poverty and others. To overcome in this spiritual battle, Christian youths must use spiritual armour. This includes prayer, reading and meditating on the word of God, faith in God's promises and courage to stand to the end. **“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil”** (Ephesians 6:10,11).

LESSON 732

GOD REJECTS SAUL

MEMORY VERSE: “And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel” (1 Samuel 15:26).

TEXT: 1 Samuel 15:1-35

In the previous lessons, God appointed and anointed Saul to be the first king of Israel. He had been moved and helped by the Spirit of God to conquer the enemy nations (1 Samuel 14:47). This is in support of the Scripture that says, **“When a man’s ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him”** (Proverbs 16:7).

In this study, God has another assignment for king Saul as a means of vengeance against the Amalekites for what they did against the children of Israel while coming out of Egypt. Unfortunately, Saul disappointed God in substituting the fear of God for that of men, and he paid dearly for it. The moment any youth substitutes the fear of God for man, he will incur His wrath. **“The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe”** (Proverbs 29:25).

SAUL COMMANDED TO DESTROY THE AMALEKITES:
(1 Samuel 15:1-9; Deuteronomy 25:17-19; Jeremiah 51:20-23; Exodus 18:1-7; Galatians 6:7)

Prophet Samuel reminded Saul of what God had done for him; he therefore charged him to be obedient to God’s instructions. To whom much is given, much is expected. Our loyalty must be to God only, for He gave His only begotten Son to die for us, therefore, we must give total obedience to Him.

“Thus, saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt” (verse 2). God will surely remember every unconfessed sin covered up in pretense.

Question 1: *How can youths escape the wrath of God?*

The only way to escape divine judgment is to realize your wrongdoings, confess them to God, renounce every evil way and relationship, and accept Jesus as Lord and Savior (Psalm 51:3-5; Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1;8,9; John 1:12). As obedient children, we must constantly walk in the ways and will of God.

“Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass” (verse 3). God often bears long with evil doers to give room for repentance. Though He bears long, He will not forbear always. Though divine justice seems to delay, it will surely come. Sinning youths and those who hurt the people of God today should repent or face the judgment of God (Ecclesiastes 8:11).

“And Saul gathered the people together, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah. And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley” (verses 4,5). This shows proper preparation by Saul to carry out the task given to him by God against the Amalekites. He brought an immense army of 200,000 footmen into the field. As serious as his preparation was, yet, he gave friendly advice to the Kenites’ to separate themselves from the Amalekites among whom they dwelt (verse 6). The Kenites were of the family and kindred of Jethro, Moses’s father-in-law. Saul acknowledged the kindness of the Kenites’ ancestors to Israel, when they came out of Egypt. In the day of judgment, God will separate the good and the bad, and hide the meek of the earth in the day of His anger. It is dangerous to be found in the company of God’s enemies, and it is our duty and interest to **“come out from among them”**, lest we share in their sins and punishment (2 Corinthians 6:17; Revelation 18:4).

Though Saul succeeded, yet he offended God because his obedience was not complete. He spared Agag, the king of the Amalekites and the best of sheep, oxen, fatlings and lambs that were good against the order of God to

destroy them all. You must not allow your common sense to supersede the direct instruction of God.

SAUL REPROVED BY SAMUEL (1 Samuel 15:10-23; Micah 6:6-8; Isaiah 1:11; Hosea 4:6-9; Psalm 7:11)

God revealed to Samuel what Saul had done, how it grieved Him and how He had rejected him from being a king over His people. This was because of Saul's partial obedience and covetousness. Samuel, though grieved, still prayed all night on the matter. Leaders and officers are expected to pray on issues about their members revealed to them by God because they are watchmen (Ezekiel 22:30). In verses 12-15, Samuel went down to meet Saul after prayer and was not carried away by the modified report or exchanged blame, but declared the word of God without fear or favor. **"Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on"** (verse 16). He reminded Saul of the honour God showed him in making him king (verse 17). Successful, honored and wealthy people should often remember their humble beginnings and should not think highly of themselves, but rather always endeavor to please God.

Samuel reminded Saul of the assignment God gave him. **"...Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed"** (verse 18). Then, Samuel rebuked him, **"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?"** (verse 19). Unfortunately, Saul put up a defense, claiming he was right, transferring the blame to the people rather than repenting and asking God for forgiveness (verses 20,21).

Question 2: *Mention people in the Bible who repented immediately after being rebuked.*

There are people in the Scriptures whose sins were forgiven for their humble and penitent heart. They include: Abimelech (Genesis 20:3-9), David (2 Samuel 12:7-13), the Ninevites (Jonah 3:5-10) and Peter (Matthew 26:75). **"The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit"** (Psalm 34:18).

“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” (verse 22). Christian youths should realize that to be obedient to God is more profitable than being involved with religious activities. Rebellion and stubbornness are as terrible as the sin of witchcraft and idolatry. What God is asking us today is, **“To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats”** (Isaiah 1:11).

Question 3: *What was the consequence of Saul's disobedience?*

“Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from *being king*” (verse 23). Have you counted the cost of rejecting the Lord? The fear of God should supersede the fear of people in your life in order not to miss your track or incur God's wrath.

SAUL REJECTED BY GOD (1 Samuel 15:24-35; 13:13,14; 1 Samuel 2:30; Psalm 75:6,7)

“And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice” (verse 24). Saul eventually submitted. It is not proper to wait for pronouncement of judgment before repentance, which might be too late like that of Saul. His prayer was to Samuel not to God (verse 25), this made his repentance false. As Christian youths or leaders, you must not go along with anyone who rejects or dishonors God (verses 25,26). Whoever God rejects, we must also reject. The dethronement of Saul was pronounced with emphasis (verses 27-29). It is a lesson for every Christian youth, that **“God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another”** (Psalm 75:6,7). Whatsoever we are doing for Him must be in complete obedience to His instructions. **“Then he said, I have sinned: yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD thy**

God" (verse 30). Saul did not realize the gravity of what he did. He was still requesting for honour before the people. The Bible says; "**Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, ...for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed**" (1 Samuel 2:30). Samuel slew Agag to complete the assignment God gave Saul, and never came to see Saul until his death, but rather mourned for him (verses 32-35).

Question 5: *What can we learn from Saul's experience?*

"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). Christian youths and leaders must learn from the life of Saul that they must not change the instruction of God for whatever reason (Revelation 22:18,19). They must not follow multitude to do evil (Exodus 23:2) but trust God and eschew the fear of men (Proverbs 29:25). They must also reject any evil suggestion (Proverbs 1:10) and hold fast to what they have in God lest any man take their place (Revelation 2:25; 3:11).

LESSON 733

DAVID ANOINTED KING

MEMORY VERSE: “Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So, Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah” (1 Samuel 16:13).

TEXT: 1 Samuel 16:1-23

The unfaithfulness of man cannot make God unfaithful. He will rather change man than allow him to frustrate His plans. Saul’s disobedience made God to replace him. **“And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbor of thine, that is better than thou”** (1 Samuel 15:28). Though Samuel mourned for him, God still rejected him. To choose a replacement for Saul, God sent Samuel to Bethlehem, to the house of Jesse and David, his youngest son, was chosen. The manner with which God chose David, who was on errand when the process of selection started, shows that His choice is based on inward qualities. Though anointed, David waited patiently for his coronation.

SAMUEL VISITS BETHLEHEM IN SEARCH OF A KING: (1 Samuel 16: 1-5; 1 Kings 19:1- 8; 1 Samuel 11:12, 13; 1 Corinthians 10:12)

“And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons” (verse 1). The process of selection of a new king to replace Saul began with God calling Samuel out of his mournful state. Samuel was a true prophet with a compassionate heart, bound by God’s word. He had earlier promised the Israelites that he will not cease to pray for them. He said, **“Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in**

ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way” (1 Samuel 12:23).

When one departs from the faith, it is expected that those close to him should mourn. They should not lose hope but pray for God’s mercy and the restoration of such backslider. However, mourning should not continue forever. Believers must rise and continue with the work of the Lord. Therefore, God told Samuel to go to Bethlehem to anoint a king in the place of Saul.

Question 1: What can believers learn from Samuel’s behavior despite his knowledge of God’s verdict on Saul?

In response to God’s command, Samuel said, “...**How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me. And the LORD said, Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the LORD”** (1 Samuel 16:2). Saul had become such a terror that he could kill anyone who made attempt to replace him or anoint another; therefore, Samuel was afraid. Fear is common to all men but the way it is managed matters a lot.

Life is full of frightful situations but those who take their fears to the Lord will get solutions while those who resort to self- management may get into trouble and complicate the problem. Abraham feared Abimelech, provided self-solution and he almost lost his wife (Genesis 20:1-3). Peter was afraid of the Jewish believers. This almost hindered the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:11-14). On the other hand, Jacob took his fear to the Lord and got divine solution (Genesis 32:11-32). Elijah expressed his fear to God, and received strength (1 Kings 19:1-8). Our fears should drive us to God like Samuel, and not turn us away from Him. Samuel got a divine directive on how to approach the assignment. Our dependence on the Lord will guarantee divine direction. When hard situations come up at school or at home, pray to God; He will work out the solutions.

Question 2: Mention some characters in the Scriptures who were afraid and the way they managed their fears.

Backsliding is terrible. Saul, who shortly after being anointed king, refused to kill those who opposed him, had degenerated to the level of wanting to murder anybody to retain the kingship (1 Samuel 11:12,13). Believers should know that the devil will try everything to hinder them from getting to heaven. **“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall”** (1 Corinthians 10:12). A good beginning does not guarantee a good ending. Therefore, we must be watchful and do everything to avoid backsliding.

Question 3: *What lesson can a believer draw from the degenerated condition of Saul at this time?*

“And Samuel did that which the LORD spake, and came to Bethlehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Comest thou peaceably” (verse 4). Obedience to the word of God should override our fears. Fear of the people drove away the fear of God from Saul’s heart; therefore, he disobeyed God. However, the fear of God drove away the fear of men from Samuel’s heart; therefore, he obeyed God. **“The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe”** (Proverbs 29:25). The presence of the man of God, which was supposed to bring joy to the elders in Bethlehem brought fear to them. As Christian youths, we should not be afraid of our leaders but respect them.

SAMUEL ANOINTS DAVID AS KING (1 Samuel 16:6-13; 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; Psalms 75:6,7; 147:10,11; Isaiah 55:8,9)

After the sacrifice, as directed by God, Samuel started the process of king selection. Jesse had eight sons and David was the youngest. Eliab was the first to be considered, being the first son. Samuel was emphatic of his choice as king. **“And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the LORD’S anointed is before him. But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart”** (verse 6,7).

Question 4: *What can you deduce from God's response to Samuel's choice?*

The way of God is beyond man's comprehension. There are some lessons to draw: one, Eliab had all the physical attributes a leader could possess but in this case, God rejected all physical attributes. Thus, we should pay attention to spiritual qualities of leaders. Two, we should not be carried away by eloquence of preachers but by the fruit they bear. Three, Samuel did not make mistake in choosing Saul, but he made a mistake here by choosing Eliab. We must seek God's guidance in every situation. We should not assume that, because we dreamt in time past and it came to pass, every dream is God's revelation. It is important to always confirm if the dream or revelation is from God or not. Four, leadership position in the church is not based on age, number of years spent in the church, parent's position or human consideration, but by divine choice.

Samuel made several attempts but he did not stop until he finally got the appointed person for the kingship. Youths should understand that failed attempts are not indications of failure in life. They should keep trying and have faith in God and success will definitely come. David, though not considered relevant, was the one chosen by God to be the next king of Israel. In the world, people are taught to showcase themselves and blow their trumpet. "If you do not blow it, nobody will blow it for you", they say. But David's life shows the way to the top. We can learn that: **one**, we should be faithful in any assignment given to us; **two**, we must not struggle to be leaders but be faithful in whatever our hands find to do and, **three**, where we will be in future will be determined by what we do today. Therefore, we must ensure that our character and conduct are acceptable to the Lord on a daily basis. The moment David was anointed by Samuel, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him. **"Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So, Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah"** (verse 13).

Question 5: *Mention some lessons youths should draw from David's selection as king.*

THE SPIRIT OF GOD DEPARTS FROM SAUL (1 Samuel 16:14-23; Job 1:6-12; Habakkuk 2:3)

“But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him” (verse 14). Human heart cannot be empty. It is either occupied by the Spirit of God or the spirit of the devil. Saul's disobedience and jealousy opened up his heart to satanic possessions. The man who prophesied with the prophets started speaking words of hatred. Backsliding opens up the heart of a one-time believer to the spirit of the devil. Therefore, believers should watch and pray, while backsliders should return to the Lord urgently.

God does not have evil spirits in His presence. Evil spirits move to and fro on the earth and it is the restraining presence of the Lord in us that keeps them away from us. Therefore, we must walk with Him always. An evil spirit from the Lord means God permitted the spirit to have its way in the life of Saul (Job 1:6-12). The man who controlled an entire nation was now being controlled by another spirit.

In order to drive away the evil spirit from Saul, a solemn music must be played from a musical instrument. A hunt for an expert in playing harp was declared and David was recommended. Though anointed a king, he was still busy doing what he used to do, waiting for the appointed time. Youths should know that every dream has its appointed time of fulfillment. Wait patiently for it. Playing of musical instrument, which was just a leisure for David brought him to the king's palace. **“A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men”** (Proverbs 18:16). David found favor in Saul's sight, therefore he requested that he should remain with him in the palace. When we have favor with God, we shall definitely have favor with men.

LESSON 734

THE NEW LIFESTYLE OF BELIEVERS

MEMORY VERSE: “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another” (Ephesians 4:24,25).

TEXT: Ephesians 4:17-32

This part of the epistle to the Ephesians deals with practical teachings for saints and the faithful in Christ.

In the first part of this chapter, Paul the apostle pleaded with the believers to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called. This call entails that they walk in lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, forbearing with one another in love and keeping the unity of the saints in the bond of peace. They were called to use their gifts to serve the body of Christ according to the grace given to them.

In the second part of this chapter, believers are called to walk in God’s light. Light is very important to man. The natural lights like sun, moon and stars are universally useful for all. There is another spiritual light. This is the light we are called to walk in. After receiving Christ as your divine Light, you will live a life that shines for His glory. This means you will be free from sins (verses 17- 19), possess Christ-like life of righteousness and holiness (verses 20-24) and live a clean life as you interact with others (verses 25-32).

CONTRAST BETWEEN SINNERS AND SAINTS
(Ephesians 4:17-19; 5:3-16; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Ephesians 2:12; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Romans 1:21)

“This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind” (verse 17). Paul the apostle, through the Spirit of the Lord, commanded Christian youths not to walk or behave as sinners. A sinner is controlled by Satan

while the saint is controlled and guided by the Spirit of God.

“Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness” (verses 18,19). There are distinctives between the saints and sinners. Sinners walk to please their master, the devil. **One**, they walk in the vanity of their minds (verse 17). This means they follow what their unclean minds say. What comes from such minds without divine influence are corrupt and do not please God. **“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). **Two**, their understanding is darkened (verse 18). The devil likes darkness. Those who associate with him walk in darkness. Hence, their mind and understanding will be darkened. These made them not to understand the things of God. **“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). This is the reason we are called upon to preach the gospel that will **“open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me”** (Acts 26:18). **Three**, they are separated from the life of God (verse 18). Anyone who is separated from God is without Christ and have no hope (Ephesians 2:12). In short, they are spiritually dead. **Four**, they are spiritually blind (verse 18). That is, they are blind to the need of their souls through Jesus Christ. It will take the power of the Spirit of God to remove this spiritual blindness from them. **Five**, they give themselves to lasciviousness (that is, showing strong immoral desire) (verse 19). **Six**, they work all uncleanness (verse 19). Uncleanness includes corrupt communication, dirty lifestyle, indecent dressing, corrupt influence, etc. **Seven**, sinners are greedy (verse 19). To be greedy means being

desirous to be rich by any means. Backsliders also exhibit the same lifestyle (Isaiah 56:10,11). Therefore, saints are called to be different from sinners by the way they live.

Question 1: *From verses 17-19, how do sinners walk?*

“Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them” (Ephesians 5:6,7). There are grave and eternal consequences of living and walking like sinners. One, such youth is under the wrath of God. Two, he cannot live with God in heaven. Therefore, he is doomed forever. The only way of escape is to turn from being a sinner to a saint. This is through repentance and faith in Christ. This decision must be taken quickly. Delay is dangerous. **“For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation”** (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Question 2: *In the light of today’s lesson, what are the consequences of walking in darkness?*

CHRIST: THE SOURCE OF OUR SALVATION AND SANCTIFICATION (Ephesians 4:20-25; Matthew 11:28-30; Philippians 2:3-5; Colossians 3:5-10, 12-15)

Jesus Christ is our Mediator and Savior (1 Timothy 2:5,6). The moment a sinner receives Christ as his Lord and Savior, the power of God’s grace changes him to a new boy or girl. This divine work is by God’s grace in the heart of a sinner. **“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). Such a youth is saved and now a saint in Christ. From this point, he is different from what he used to be as a sinner. Now that he is in Christ, he lives a new life and learns to be like Him. In Christ, we do not learn bad and evil things. Rather, we learn humility, meekness, obedience, respect, etc. from Him. Simply put, the new convert begins to manifest the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23).

“If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus” (verse 21). The truth

is very important in life. It is the truth that saves a sinner (John 8:32). On the other hand, a saint is preserved by continuing in the truth (John 8:31). To know the truth, saints must make themselves available before the Lord to teach them. God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit make up the great team that instructs and teaches believers the word of God (Isaiah 48:17; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; Matthew 7:28,29; 1 Corinthians 2:9-14).

Question 3: How can a Christian youth be taught of the Lord today?

The Lord is immortal and invisible. We cannot see Him with our human eyes. Therefore, He uses divinely appointed servants to teach His people. To be taught of the Lord today, one must regularly attend the services available in the church like Sunday Worship Service, Monday Bible Study, Thursday Revival and Evangelism Training Service, School Fellowship, Youth Home Success Fellowship and other special programs like Success Camp, retreats, crusade, etc. The Scripture says, **“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”** (Colossians 3:16).

“And be renewed in the spirit of your mind” (verse 23). Youths who are taught of the Lord will have a renewed heart and Christ-like mind. This is the result of true repentance and restoration through Christ. This brings spiritual revival and renewal. During this process of spiritual cleansing, there are things to be “put off” and “put on”.

As saints, all evil things of old lifestyles must be put off. These include deceit, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication, etc. **“That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts”** (verse 22). In their place, Christ-like character should be put on. These are holiness of life, mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, charity etc.

The Christ-like life comes with salvation while sanctification experience helps one to go deeper and higher in Him. **“Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the**

people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. **Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach**" (Hebrews 13:12,13). Jesus Christ is not only our Savior, He is also our Sanctifier. The purpose of His death was to save and sanctify us. Allow that purpose to be fulfilled in your life.

Question 4: What are the differences between salvation and sanctification?

"And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (verse 24). Salvation is the forgiveness of sins through repentance and faith in Christ. Sanctification is the removal of inward sin through consecration and faith in Christ. Salvation brings righteousness, while sanctification brings inward holiness (Romans 3:21-25; Titus 2:14). Salvation opens the gate of the kingdom of God to enter while sanctification qualifies one to enter heaven and live with God forever. As salvation is an instantaneous experience of pardon and peace in the heart, so sanctification experience gives a believer grace to cleave to the Lord to the end.

CHRISTIAN CONDUCT AND LIFESTYLE OF SAINTS (Ephesians 4:25-32; 5:3-12; Philippians 2:14,15; 1 Peter 2:9-12)

The purpose of God in saving us is to impact His image on us through Christ. **"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren"** (Romans 8:29). This divine plan and purpose cannot be fulfilled when we allow negative lifestyles to be in us as saints.

Our text enumerates negative lifestyles and conducts Christian youths must not allow in their lives as saints. They are: one, **lying** (verse 25). As saints, they should speak the truth at all times and places. Saints do not lie. **"For he said, Surely, they are my people, children that will not lie: so, he was their Savior"** (Isaiah 63:8).

Two, **anger** (verse 26,27,32). Christian youths should be calm and not get angry at the least provocation. When offended, one should be calm and tell the person why he

is not happy with the other's action. When the person does not accept one's position, one should report the matter to the leaders like teachers in the school, our parents, youth leaders, etc. (Matthew 18:15,16). It is needful to settle amicably and maintain a sound relationship. Three, **stealing** (verse 28). Stealing is taking what does not belong to you without permission. Stealing of any kind and through whatever means is sin and evil. Four, **corrupt communication** (verse 29). When there is a change in the heart, it must affect our language. Saved youths must be careful of the way they speak. We are warned thus, **"Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners"** (1 Corinthians 15:33). Five, **grieving the Holy Spirit** (verse 30). This means doing things that He does not approve or accept. Others include **bitterness, wrath, clamor, evil speaking and malice**. These things must not be in saints.

Question 5: *Mention some negative lifestyles Christian youths must not allow in their lives as saints.*

Instead of the above negative lifestyles, we are to put on the positive conduct which are expected of saints. **"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you"** (verse 32). Those Christian conducts expected from believing youths are: speaking the truth always, good communication, showing hospitality, kindness, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, etc.

In conclusion, the lesson today exposes everyone to the need to walk in the light of the gospel of Christ. Those who live in sin are walking in darkness and Satan is their master. Those who live in righteousness and holiness are living in the light of Christ. Are you in the light or in darkness? Does your life please or displease the Lord? Do others see Jesus in you? Is your life driving others to Christ or away from Him? Examine yourself whether you are a sinner or saint (2 Corinthians 13:5). After examining yourself, also allow the Lord to search and purge you.

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked

way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23,24).

LESSON 735

BELIEVERS' WALK AND WISDOM

MEMORY VERSE: “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:15,16).

TEXT: Ephesians 5:1-21

The book of Ephesians, written to the saints in Ephesus deals with believers' wealth and walk in Christ. The present chapter under study continues with practical walk in Christ that must be exhibited by all Christian youths. To walk acceptably in this sinful world, divine wisdom is needed. Hence, the memory verse encourages us to be vigilant, watchful or careful and not to walk as foolish youths because, **“the days are evil”**.

“Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore, get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding” (Proverbs 4:7). Divine wisdom is God-given wisdom. It is the proper application of knowledge; it is following God's directives as revealed by His Spirit. It is the use of knowledge to achieve desired results. A Christian youth cannot survive and accomplish God's purpose without the Spirit of wisdom (Isaiah 11:2).

Question 1: *What is divine wisdom?*

To possess this heavenly wisdom, a youth must accept Jesus Christ, who is the power and wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24). He is the gateway into the wisdom of God. We cannot do without Him. Jesus said, **“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”** (John 15:5). Furthermore, we should, study and mediate on His word.

WALKING IN LOVE AS SAINTS (Ephesians 5:1-7; 1 Corinthians 11:1; John 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 4 :9; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18)

“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children” (verse 1). Children of God are quite different from the children of Satan. Those who are saved follow Jesus in everything. Jesus Christ is the perfect Example to Christians and a role Model. Apostle Paul challenged believers thus: **“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ”** (1 Corinthians 11:1).

“And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour” (verse 2). The love God has for man made Him send Jesus to die for their sins. Jesus Himself loves us so much that He offered Himself as a sacrificial Lamb for our sins.

“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” (1 John 3:16). Jesus Christ loves us the same way God the Father does. He loves sincerely, scripturally, and sacrificially. He is sensitive to our needs and problems. He loves us according to the leading of the Spirit of God. Therefore, we are called to love like Him. This will take His grace and strength to do. All believing youths must pray to love like Him. However, as we express our love to both brothers and sisters, we should not let our good be evil spoken of. **“Let not then your good be evil spoken of”** (Romans 14:16).

Question 2: *How will you describe the love of Jesus for us?*

“But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks” (verses 3,4). Saints of God are saved, cleansed and purified in character and conduct. As saints, the following evils must not be in our midst. These are immorality, uncleanness, filthiness, foolish talking, jesting, idolatry, etc. When a person allows these things in his life, the consequences are that such a person will have no part in the kingdom of God; the wrath of God will be upon him every day (Psalm 7:11) and he will end up in hell fire if he

did not repent (Psalm 9:17). Why will you allow evil to drag you into spending eternity in hell?

The solutions to these evils are: one, genuinely turn away from sin and separate from sinners or things that will drag one into hell (verse 7). Two, Christian youths must walk in the light of the gospel as they have been taught (verse 8). Three, there is need to bear the fruit of righteousness (verse 9). Four, it is necessary to prove every invitation before accepting it (verse 10). Five, believing youths must not have fellowship with evil associations (verse 11). Six, reprove anyone who wants to lure one to do evil (verse 11). Seven, not speaking evil of anyone (verse 12). The command of the Lord is to **“Abstain from all appearance of evil”** (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

Question 3: *How can youths have victory over these evils?*

WALKING IN THE LIGHT OF THE SAVIOUR (Ephesians 5:8,1-3,14; John 1:1-9; 3:19-21; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35,36,46; Matthew 5:14-16; 1 John 1:5-7; Isaiah 60:1-3)

“For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light” (verse 8). Jesus Christ is the Light of the world and of our lives. The scriptural evidence of following Him will be visible when we walk in His light. As Christian youths, we are called into the marvelous light of God and we should shine as children of light (1 Peter 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:5). Also, we are expected to put on the armour of light always (Romans 13:12). When we walk in the light, we have fellowship with God the Father and with one another. Hence, we should shine for others to see Christ in us and believe on Him. **“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).

“Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light” (verse 14). A sinner is spiritually dead and in darkness. It is the power of Christ through the gospel that can quicken and make him alive. When Christ comes into one’s heart,

He will give light and life in abundance. Hence, we should allow Him to shine in our lives. God is ready to do this for us. **“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”** (2 Corinthians 4:6).

WALKING IN THE WISDOM OF THE SCRIPTURES:

(Ephesians 5:15-21; Isaiah 11:2,3; Deuteronomy 5:29; 10:12; Malachi 1:6; Proverbs 24:21; Hebrews 12:28,29; Psalm 128:1-6)

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise” (verse 15). Christian youths are called to walk differently from sinning youths. As Christians, we are called to walk in wisdom (Colossians 4:5), light (Revelation 21:24), truth (3 John 4), honesty (1 Thessalonians 4:12), worthy of God (1 Thessalonians 2:12), according to the rule of the gospel (Galatians 6:16), in the Spirit (Galatians 5:25) and in faith (2 Corinthians 5:7).

“Redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (verse 16). The Apostle gives us reasons we should walk wisely. It is to recover time because the days are evil and life is short. Youths should know this and prepare for the future. Our usefulness, profitability and productivity in life depend on how we use time. Time wasted cannot be recovered. Let everything we do, be to fulfil God’s purpose in our lives. We should be involved in the service of the Lord. We should touch and turn lives to Christ through the preaching of the gospel. This is the major work that can make eternal impact on the lives of boys and girls around us. Also, let your education and profession count for eternity by using the opportunity at your disposal to expand the kingdom of God. **“Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is”** (verse 17). The will of God is the divine plan and purpose for your life. The will of God covers all aspects of man’s life. It includes but not limited to:

- (i) salvation of his soul (2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4-6);
- (ii) transformation of life (Romans 12:1,2);

- (iii) deliverance from every evil work (Galatians 1:4; 2 Timothy 4:17-);
- (iv) sanctification of heart and life (1 Thessalonians 4:3);
- (v) being perfect and complete in Christ (Colossians 4:12);
- (vi) being filled with the Holy Spirit's power;
- (vii) rendering acceptable service to the Lord;
- (viii) suffering persecution for Christ's sake (1 Peter 4:19; Philippians 1:29);
- (ix) offering acceptable praise and worship to the Creator (1 Thessalonians 5:18);
- (x) submission to appointed authority (1 Peter 2:13-15), and
- (xi) successful life (Joshua 1:8).

Question 4: *What is the divine purpose for everyone?*

“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (verse 18). Our Creator commands us to stay clear of drunkenness. A drunk will be filled with other evil vices. The Scriptures reveal that sinners are filled with wrath (Luke 4:28), fear (Luke 5:21,22,26), madness (Luke 6:11), indignation (Acts 5:17), envy (Acts 13:45), confusion (Acts 19:29), unrighteousness (Romans 1:29), violence (Genesis 5:11,13) sorrow (Ezekiel 23:33) and shame (Habakkuk 2:16). Instead of being filled with such evil things, we are to be filled with the Spirit. Apart from being filled with the Spirit, we are commanded, challenged and encouraged to be filled with wisdom and grace (Exodus 28:3; Luke 2:40), joy (Acts 13:52), fullness of God (Ephesians 3:19), fruit of righteousness (Philippians 1:11), knowledge of God's will (Colossians 1:9) and the glory of God (Psalm 72:19; Numbers 14:21).

“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus

Christ” (verses 19,20). Any believer who is not filled with the Spirit robs himself of the benefits accrued to God’s people. These benefits include: **one**, teaching and preaching the gospel effectively. **Two**, singing and composing spiritual hymns and songs for the worship of God. **Three**, offering acceptable praises to God. **Four**, enablement by the Spirit to be submissive to higher authorities. **Five**, worshipping the Lord in Spirit and in truth. You cannot do without the Spirit of God. Surrender to God today and His Spirit will change and transform you into another boy or girl for His glory.

Questions 5: *Mention some results of being filled with the Spirit of God.*

“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God” (verse 21). From this verse, the Lord requires Christian youths to submit to one another. However, the quality of this submission should be in the fear of the Lord. Christian youths who walk in love, light and wisdom of Christ must fear Him. Today, the fear of the Lord is relegated to the background. To fear the Lord means to give reverence, respect and honour to Him. Fearing God is not for Old Testament people alone but also for New Testament saints. **“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God”** (2 Corinthians 7:1).

Our knowledge of how to fear the Lord enables us to worship and serve Him acceptably (Hebrews 12:28). Therefore, we need to know:

(a) The command and challenge to fear the Lord (Leviticus 19:32; Joshua 24:14; Ecclesiastes 12:13; Luke 12:5; 1 Peter 1:17; Revelation 14:6,7): The Scripture declares plainly the mind of God to everyone. He created us to fear Him as His creatures. He, not only commands, but challenges us to do so willingly. When we fear God, we will obey His words (Ecclesiastes 12:13), respect elders, leaders and parents (Leviticus 19:3), not oppress anybody, take bribe, or rule with rigor (Leviticus 25:17,36,43), serve and cleave to Him (Deuteronomy 10:20,21), not be

hypocritical (Colossians 3:22), be qualified for His service (Exodus 18:21; Malachi 3:16), etc.

(b) The causes and consequences of not fearing God (Genesis 20:11; 1 Samuel 15 :2 4; Deuteronomy 28:58,59; Romans 3:18): The major cause of not fearing God is the fear of man. **“The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe”** (Proverbs 29:25). The fear of man will not allow us to obey the word of God. We must have divine courage to obey Him always. Also, all those who fear men cannot serve Him acceptably (Isaiah 51:12,13). There are great consequences for not fearing the Lord. There will be punishment on earth and in eternity (Deuteronomy 28:58,59). Examples of those who refused to fear the Lord and suffered great consequences are Pharaoh (Exodus 9:30), the Amalekites (Deuteronomy 25:17,18), Saul, the first king of Israel (1 Samuel 15:24).

(c) The courage and commitment to fear the Lord (Isaiah 57:11; 29:23; Luke 12:5): It takes divine courage and commitment on our part to fear God always in these last days. It seems those who do not fear the Lord are more than the righteous. Yet, the Lord wants us to obey and fear Him.

(d) The commendation for Christians who fear the Lord (Psalm 128:1-6; Revelation 11:18): There are divine blessings for Christian youths who fear the Lord. Such youths will enjoy protection (Deuteronomy 6:24), satisfaction and fruitfulness (Psalm 128:1-6), goodness of the Lord (Ecclesiastes 8:12), life and peace (Malachi 2:5,6) long life (Proverbs 10:26; 19:23), knowledge and wisdom (Proverbs 1:7; 15:23), ability to stay away from evil (Proverbs 16:6), riches and honour (Proverbs 22:4) and happiness (Proverbs 28:14). Therefore, **“be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long”** (Proverbs 23:17).

(e) The catalogue of comrades who feared the Lord (Proverbs 24:21): The Scripture is full of believers who feared the Lord in their days. These examples inspire us to do the same today. Some of them include: Joseph (Genesis 42:18), Abraham (Genesis 22:12), Job (Job 1:8), Obadiah (1 Kings 18:3), Hananiah (Nehemiah 7:2), the Midwives

in Egypt (Exodus 1:17), Phinehas (Numbers 26:6-8) and Cornelius (Acts 10:1,2) among others.

It is our turn to fear the Lord in this generation. Our decision must be to learn to do so all the days of our lives. The Lord commands thus: **“And that their children, which have not known anything, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it”** (Deuteronomy 31:13). Are you ready to fear Him?

LESSON 736

PRECEPTS FOR CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

MEMORY VERSE: “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh” (Ephesians 5:31).

TEXT: Ephesians 5:22-33

The Bible, the holy word of God, has great and wonderful instructions for His children. The practical teachings from the book of Ephesians cut across all groups of people. Our text today deals with precepts on Christian marriage. The Lord Himself said, **“It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him”** (Genesis 2:18).

“Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor of the LORD” (Proverbs 18:22). The Scripture confirms that marriage is a good thing and those who marry in a righteous way receive favor from the Lord. Christian marriage is a legal contract between a Christian man (not boy) and a Christian woman (not girl) by coming together to become husband and wife after necessary processes have been fulfilled. **“Therefore, shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh”** (Genesis 2:24). To choose a wife or husband, one must depend upon God who will lead and direct him/her aright. The relationship of one husband and one wife is the approved marriage before the Lord. The importance of marriage cannot be over stressed. The plan and purpose of God in instituting this relationship are for **partnership** (Ecclesiastes 4:9- 12), **procreation** (Genesis 1:28), pleasure (Proverbs 5:15-20), purity (1 Corinthians 7:2), power (Deuteronomy 32:30), protection (Proverbs 31:11,12) and **progress** (Proverbs 31:13-29).

Question 1: *Why is the teaching on Christian marriage important to Christian youths?*

As stated earlier, marriage is for a matured man and woman. Such a person must be matured spiritually, emotionally, physically, socially, psychologically and financially. In a few years' time, you will find this lesson very important. Therefore, the essence of the study is to prepare youths for marriage and to know the responsibilities of a future husband and wife. As responsible Christian boys and girls, your main duty now is to study and/or learn a trade to prepare yourselves to be good and balanced parents.

PORTRAITS OF GODLY PARENTS (Ephesians 5:22-29,33; Colossians 3:18,19; Matthew 19:4-6; 1 Peter 3:1-7; Proverbs 31:10-31)

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord” (verse 22). The portrait or picture of a godly wife is revealed in the Scriptures. The qualities of such good and godly wife determine the strength, stability and success of the family. The wife will either make or mar the home. **“Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands”** (Proverbs 14:1). The resources God deposits in her are to raise a godly and righteous home. The church and society will experience great peace and security when mothers mould their families according to divine pattern. As a youth, the best time to pray and prepare for your future home is now when you are young.

“Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised” (Proverbs 31:30). The scriptural portrait of a good wife from the Lord are: **(1)** Submission to her husband as to the Lord (Ephesians 5:22; Colossians 3:18). **(2)** Faithfulness to him in all things (1 Timothy 3:11). **(3)** Sobriety and gravity (Titus 2:4; 2 Timothy 2:9-12). **(4)** Love for her husband and the children (Titus 2:4). **(5)** Discretion and chastity in all things (Titus 2:5). **(6)** Obedience and faith in God (1 Peter 3:1; 1 Timothy 2:15; Titus 2:5). **(7)** Hard work and industry (Proverbs 31:10-31). As a girl, do you possess these model qualities to be a future Christian wife?

“To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God

be not blasphemed” (Titus 2:5). The wife has great and important roles to play in the family. Some of them are: **(a)** keeper of the home; **(b)** love and care giver for the members of the family; **(c)** ensures that there is a balanced meal for the family (Proverbs 31:15); **(d)** makes the best use of family resources; **(e)** maintains discipline in the family, especially among the children; **(f)** ensures that the family is raised in the fear of the Lord; **(g)** respects her husband as an example for the children to follow (Ephesians 5:33).

Question 2: Recall some divine portraits of a godly wife and mention some of her responsibilities in the family.

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (verse 25). As God wants girls to be good wives and mothers, He is also interested in boys too. He wants them to become good husbands and fathers.

The portraits of a good husband include the following:

(i) Love for the wife as Christ loved the Church (Colossians 3:19). **(ii)** Good administrator of his house (1 Timothy 3:4). **(iii)** Knowledge and wisdom to take decisions aright (1 Peter 3:7). **(iv)** Hard work and diligence (2 Thessalonians 3: 7-12). **(v)** Patience and longsuffering (1 Timothy 3:2,3). **(vi)** Blameless and hospitable (Titus 1:6-8). **(vii)** A good communicator (Ephesians 6:4). As a boy, do you possess these model qualities to be a future Christian husband?

“So, ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church” (verses 28,29). The responsibilities of a husband in the family include the following: **(a)** He must provide adequately for the family (1 Timothy 5:8). **(b)** He must love, cherish and nourish his wife. **(c)** He must train and discipline his children in the way of the Lord. **(d)** He should not provoke his children to wrath (Ephesians 6:4). **(e)** He must honour his wife always before others (1 Peter 3:7). **(f)** He should be a good example to the members of the family. **(g)** He is to ensure that there is a good atmosphere for spiritual growth and development in the family.

Question 3: Recall some divine portraits of a godly husband and mention some of his responsibilities in the family.

“And who is sufficient for these things? “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God” (2 Corinthians 2:16; 3:5). We can make ourselves ready to fulfil these responsibilities by observing the following: first, we must have spiritual experiences. That is, we must be saved, sanctified and filled with the Holy Spirit. Second, we should learn basic things that are useful in managing the home from our godly parents or matured Christian families (Titus 2:3-6). Third, we should be involved in doing domestic chores. Fourth, we should be serious with our studies or trade now. Fifth, we should pray for divine help and strength. Examples of people who were successful in these God-given responsibilities include Abraham, Sarah, Hannah, Philip, Aquila and his wife, Priscilla etc.

PRECEPTS FOR GODLY PARENTS (Ephesians 5:31,32; Genesis 2:18,21-25; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 19:4-9; Corinthians 7:5,39)

Every machine has a manual from the manufacturer. It normally contains instructions and guides on how to operate the machine. Any time something goes wrong, the manual could help to detect the fault and how to rectify it. In the same way, marriage was instituted and established by God. Anyone who wants to marry must go to Him on how to operate it. Even those who have married and have challenges should go back to Him for divine solutions. From our text and other passages of the Scriptures, there are precepts and instructions for anyone on how to marry.

The divine precepts for marriage include:

(1) Purpose of marriage: At the beginning, Adam did not see the need for marriage. It was God who saw the need for it (Genesis 2:18). He then made provision to meet Adam’s need. Today, young people get into marriage without knowing the purpose. This decision has brought untold hardship to them. On the other hand, some wait too late before thinking about marriage. They do not see

the need for it. This is because they see many problems associated with marriage. Remember, you are different. To you, the Lord says, **“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you”** (Jeremiah 29:11,12). Do not go away from the Lord or leave the church because of marriage. Concentrate on your education or learning a trade. At the right time, the Lord will perform His word in your life.

(2) Process of marriage: The Lord made the woman and brought her to Adam (Genesis 2:21,22). It is God who gives life partners. Therefore, His children should go to Him in prayer of faith and He will reveal His mind to them (Psalm 32:8; 37:4,5). After knowing the mind of God, inform your leader in the church. The next step is to meet your parents for their consent. After this, there will be arrangement for courtship, payment of dowry and finally, the solemnization of Christian marriage. God does not permit His children or expect them to marry unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14- 18).

(3) Pattern for marriage: After the wedding ceremony, the Lord commands the couple to leave other people (parents, friends, church leaders and members, etc.) and cleave to each other. **“Therefore, shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh”** (Genesis 2:24). This will enable the new couple to learn, know, understand and fellowship together. It is through this means that they become one flesh. It is also the time to put the model qualities into use. The Lord expects that the union will last until death separates them. Therefore, there is no room for divorce or separation (Malachi 2:14-16). It is the duty of the husband and wife to make the relationship blossom and wonderful. The Lord who started the journey promised to keep supplying all that is needed to make this union fulfil its divine purpose.

Question 4: *What are the divine precepts for those waiting to marry?*

PERFECTION THROUGH CHRIST (Ephesians 5:25-33; Timothy 2:19; Galatians 1:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:9-15)

The husband and wife will not be able to enjoy their marriage or follow divine precepts without divine help. The husband needs the grace of God to honour, cherish, protect and care for his wife without external influence. On the other hand, the wife can only be true and devoted to her husband and have divine strength in this evil world only by the grace of God. She will be able to submit, love, honour, cherish and comfort her husband without distraction from outside. To achieve these great responsibilities, Christian youths who expect to enjoy their marriage relationship in the future must possess these basic Christian experiences. **“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave *himself* for it; That he might *sanctify and cleanse* it with the washing of water by the word”** (verses 25,26). There are two basic spiritual experiences stated in our text for Christians who want to enjoy the marriage relationship and determine to get to heaven. These are salvation and sanctification experiences. **“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything”** (Ephesians 5:23,24). Anyone without salvation will be filled with all unrighteousness (Romans 1:29-32). A life filled with unrighteousness can affect the marriage relationship negatively. After salvation, the Lord expects you to move on to be sanctified. Sanctification is the second work of grace in the heart of a believer by which inward sin is cleansed by the word of God, the blood of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. These spiritual experiences are necessary for the husband and wife to be. The experiences will grant them grace to love, submit, respect, honour, cherish, comfort, protect and care for one another (Ephesians 5:22; Philippians 4:7). To get salvation, a sinner must repent and accept Christ by faith. After receiving Him, he should consecrate his life to the Lord to be sanctified by faith. These spiritual experiences are the divine antidotes to stable and successful home. Our prayer should be:

*“O give us homes built firm upon the Savior,
Where Christ is Head and Counsellor and Guide;*

*Where ev'ry child is taught His love and favor,
And gives his heart to Christ, the Crucified:*

*How sweet to know that tho' his foot-steps waver,
His faithful Lord is walking by his side!"*

Question 5: State the spiritual experiences Christian youths need to possess to enjoy marriage and how one can get them.

LESSON 737

BELIEVERS' RESPONSIBILITIES AT HOME AND WORK

MEMORY VERSE: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise)” (Ephesians 6:1,2).

TEXT: EPHESIANS 6:1-9

Christian youths are special in the hands of the Lord. Their character, conduct and comportment reflect Christ both at home, school or workplace. Our text today deals with their responsibilities at home and workplace (school); and how their parents and teachers should relate with them.

Question 1: *What is the expectation of God as youths relate with their parents and teachers?*

“Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law. For I was my father’s son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live” (Proverbs 4:1-4). The expectation of God as children relate with their parents and teachers is that they should obey, respect and honour them. There are divine promises, favor and blessings for those who obey (Ephesians 6:1-3).

On the other hand, the Lord also expects their parents and teachers (masters) to train and encourage them. However, both parents, teachers and children cannot obey the commandments of the Lord without divine strength and grace. Therefore, youths should know that it will take the grace of God to obey their parents as **“in the Lord”** and **“in all things”** (Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20). To receive this divine strength, we need Jesus Christ in our lives by faith and turning away from evils. Jesus said, **“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” (John 15:5).

FIRST COMMANDMENT WITH DIVINE PROMISE
:(Ephesians 6:1-4; Exodus 20:12; Colossians 3:20,21; Leviticus 19:32; Deuteronomy 5:16; Proverbs 23:22; 20:20; 22:6)

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right” (verse 1). Here, the Lord specifically directs His word to all children and commands them to obey their parents (father and mother). In this instruction, the Lord said, **“for this is right”** to obey always. In these last days, the spirit of disobedience is prevalent. **“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy”** (2 Timothy 3:1,2). It is scripturally and morally wrong for a child to curse, despise or beat his parents. There is a divine punishment for this. **“And he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death”** (Exodus 21:15).

As Christian youths, the extent of our obedience is as **“in the Lord”** and **“as it fit in the Lord”**. Therefore, we humbly say no to any instruction that is against the word of God. The evidence of obedience to our parents is shown in the way we respect and honour them. The Scripture says, **“Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise)”** (verse 2).

Question 2: Mention children who obeyed or disobeyed their parents in the Scriptures.

Examples of children who obeyed their parents in the Bible are Samuel (1 Samuel 2:11,20,26; 3:19); Esther (Esther 2:10,11,20); Jonadab’s children or the Rechabites (Jeremiah 35:18, 19), Daniel (Daniel 1:8); Philip’s daughters (Acts 21:8,9); Timothy and Titus (spiritual children of Paul) (Philippians 2:19-23; 1 Corinthians 4:17; Titus 1:4,5). Also, Jesus Christ obeyed the heavenly Father in all things and always. He is our perfect Example (John 8:28,29). As there were those who obeyed, so there were disobedient children in the Bible. Some of them were Hophni and Phinehas,

Onan (Genesis 38:8-10), Samson (Judges 14:1-3) etc. As a child in the home, are you obedient or disobedient to your parents?

“Honour 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” (verses 2,3). The command to obey our parents comes with a divine promise. When we obey them, we have progress, prosperity, protection and preservation from evil.

“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (verse 4). For the children to obey their parents, the atmosphere or environment must be suitable, conducive and friendly. Hence, the Lord commands parents to train, nurture and admonish the children in His way. **“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it”** (Proverbs 22:6). Therefore, youths should be submissive, humble and surrender to the instructions and corrections of their parents. They should pray for their parents to have divine wisdom and strength to do their part. When youths are well-trained, they will be great instruments in the hands of the Lord. Also, they will be useful in their families, church and the nation. **“My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck”** (Proverbs 1:8).

FAITHFULNESS OF CHRISTIANS AT WORKPLACE: (Ephesians 6:5-8; Colossians 3:22-25; Titus 2:9,10; 1 Peter 2:18,19; Titus 3:1,2; Romans 12:11)

“Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ” (verse 5). The Lord calls on Christian youths to be obedient to their masters or teachers at the workplace or school. They are exhorted and challenged to be faithful. The attitude of a Christian youth to work must be different from that of the unbelieving youth. It is unfaithfulness to steal the master's materials and money. It is evil to cheat in the workplace

or examination hall. It is unscriptural to tell lies or give incorrect information to a customer on the level of quality of the job or product when you know it is inferior. Christian youths should not argue with their masters or challenge their authorities. We are commanded thus: **“Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things”** (Titus 2:9,10). Also, going late to school or work, procrastinating to do assignments and laziness should not be our lifestyles. **“Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord”** (Romans 12:11).

Question 3: How should Christian youths obey their masters and teachers?

“Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye service, as men pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God” (Colossians 3:22). The Lord commands Christian youths to obey their masters and teachers as follows: (1) **With fear and trembling**: This means that we should respect and honour them. (2) **In singleness of heart**: Christian youths should obey their masters and teachers with their whole heart, without any reservation according to the word of God. (3) **Not with eye service**: We are not only to obey or work when our masters and teachers are around or see us. Our obedience should be much more when they are not around. **“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”** (Philippians 2:12). (4) **Not as men-pleasers**: This means to impress the master as if you are sincere when you are not. This is not a Christian character and conduct. (5) **With complete submission**: Our obedience should be with humility, submitting to authority at school or workplace. However, any instruction contrary to the word of God should be politely declined.

Question 4: Why should Christian youths obey their masters and teachers?

Some Christian youths may question why they should obey their masters and teachers who are not born again. From our text, the Lord gives reasons why they must obey and how to do it. One, it is because of Christ. Complete obedience shows that we belong to Him and those in authority over us will give glory to God (verses 5,7). Two, it is the will of God (verse 6).

“Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free” (verse 8). When we obey those in authority over us, there will be reward. Those who do not obey will receive punishment for their bad behavior and conduct. It will also bring shame to the name of the Lord. Joseph, Daniel and the maid of Naaman were good examples of youths in the workplace or school who obeyed their masters. Through Joseph, the Lord prospered His master, Potiphar (Genesis 39:2-5). In the case of Daniel, he lived a life that gave honour to God (Daniel 1:8,21; 2:46-49). Are you representing Christ well in your school or workplace? *“Let others see Jesus in you.”*

COUNSEL FOR CHIEF EXECUTIVES IN THE WORKPLACE (Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 4:1; Genesis 29:15; 31:7,41; Leviticus 19:13; Deuteronomy 24:15; James 5:4)

“And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him” (verse 9). A chief executive is a person in charge of a workplace. The Bible calls him “master”. The Principal is the head of your school; he is the chief executive having authority to enforce rules and regulations in the school as directed by the government. In the workplace, the owner, manager or appointed officers are the people in charge. They are to ensure things are done appropriately. Although, the master has authority, the Lord also commands them to be fair in their dealings with the workers and students. They are commanded not to threaten anyone. As servants work faithfully, the Lord expects the masters to pay them appropriately and promptly. **“Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that**

ye also have a Master in heaven” (Colossians 4:1). It is unscriptural to withhold the wages of workers or labourers. **“Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbor, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning” (Leviticus 19:13).**

Question 5: Why does God command masters to deal well with the servants?

Jesus Christ, our Lord and Master is in heaven, observing all that we do. He will render to everyone according to his works. Furthermore, the master should provide a conducive and secure environment for work. It is also the duty of the master to make provisions for the protective equipment and welfare of workers. This means that the policies of the workplace should be human- friendly.

In conclusion, our study challenges and calls all – children, parents, servants and masters to perform their responsibilities according to the standard of the word of God. Anyone who fails will receive the repayment from the Lord. **“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 the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons” (Colossians 3:23-25).**

LESSON 738

COMPLETE ARMOR FOR SPIRITUAL WARFARE

MEMORY VERSE: “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12).

TEXT: EPHESIANS 6:10-24

The Spirit of God knows the needs of believers whether present or future. **“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end”** (Jeremiah 29:11). As Paul, the apostle was about to end the epistle to the Ephesians, the Lord drew his attention to a very important aspect of Christian living called spiritual warfare.

Question 1: *What do you understand by spiritual warfare? Why is it necessary for Christian youths to know about it?*

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds)” (2 Corinthians 10:3,4). Spiritual warfare is an invisible battle between Christians, Satan and his agents. It is an unseen war against believers by the devil. The weapons for this war are spiritual and invisible. The Christian youths must not be ignorant of it. The spiritual warfare affects both believers and unbelievers. **“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”** (1 Peter 5:8). There are many reasons why we must not be ignorant about the subject of spiritual warfare. **One**, we cannot live a consistent

Christian life without fighting against the devil. The aim of the devil is to make believers compromise their faith in the Lord. Compromise is a sin. When there is a sin, fellowship with the Lord will be cut off and the privilege of going to heaven lost. **Two**, it is the knowledge of this subject that enables the believer to withstand the devices, strategies and methods of Satan to turn them away from the Lord. The Scripture confirms that **“there are many adversaries”** (1 Corinthians 16:9). This is therefore the reason believers must be aware of spiritual warfare. It is for this purpose that God made spiritual resources for Christian youths to successfully fight against the devil. The Apostle ends the epistle by requesting for their prayer and support in reaching unreached sinners.

REALITY OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE (Ephesians 6:10-13; Daniel 10:11-14; 2 Timothy 4:14-18; 1 Peter 5:8,9; 1 Thessalonians 2:18; Job 1:6-12; 1 Corinthians 15:30,32)

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” (verse 10). As Paul concluded the letter to the Ephesian believers, he was directed by the Holy Spirit to exhort them on the need to know the reality of spiritual warfare. In Ephesus, he fought with men who had beastly nature (1 Corinthians 15:32). This exhortation was given to Christians, who are the children of God. Hence, the children of God must be watchful and vigilant against the wiles of the devil. To do this, they must be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. The power and the might of the Lord can dislodge the devices and strategies of Satan. The Christian youths must not allow the enemy to make them afraid. **“And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God”** (Philippians 1:28).

“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (verse 11). Victory over Satan and his agents is not automatic. Believers must put on the complete armour of God. This will enable them to withstand the devil. Also, this warfare is not against fellow boys and girls. It is against spiritual principalities,

rulers of darkness, power and spiritual wickedness that want to stop us from doing the will of God.

Question 2: *Is spiritual warfare real today? Support your answer with Scriptures.*

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (verse 12). In the Old Testament, believers’ warfare was mostly physical but with spiritual implications. For example, David fought against Goliath. That was physical war. Suppose Goliath had defeated and killed David, Jesus Christ would not have come through his lineage. Praise God, David overcame by the name of the Lord. That was a spiritual war against Goliath. This is the reason every Christian youth must be ready to fight the devil because spiritual warfare is real and practical. The Scripture is true concerning everything including spiritual warfare. The reality of warfare is because the devil is behind it. He causes temptations (Mark 1:12,13), evil and wickedness (2 Timothy 4:14), tries to hinder the word, will and work of God (2 Timothy 4:15; 1 Thessalonians 2:18), hides the gospel from sinners (2 Corinthians 4:3,4; Acts 13:6-12), causes sicknesses and oppressions (Luke 13:11-17) and brings failures, disappointment, trials and persecutions (Acts 16:16-24; Exodus 1:8-22). No Christian youth should cry, weep or give up because of the devil’s activities. The Bible says, **“He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose, the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil”** (1 John 3:8). With the understanding of this subject, the Lord will destroy and conquer every activity of the devil in your life. **“No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD”** (Isaiah 54:17).

RESOURCES FOR SPIRITUAL WARFARE (Ephesians 6:13-18; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; 1 Samuel 17:32-54; 2 Chronicles 20:1-24; Isaiah 54:17; Jeremiah 1:19)

Spiritual battle is invisible; hence, we need spiritual weapons or armour to fight. One cannot use physical weapons to conquer in such a battle. Also, the spiritual weapon can only be used by those who are spiritual in nature. Therefore, for anyone to have victory in spiritual battle, such a person must be sound spiritually. Sins bind one to Satan. The Savior, Jesus Christ, is the only Person who can set sinners free from all sins. **“But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”** (1 Corinthians 15:57). It is this initial victory that gives foundation and access to the resources for the spiritual warfare.

The aim of Satan and his agents is to wrestle or fight with Christian youths, weaken, overcome and make them ineffective. No Christian youth can afford to joke with them. He should be in constant warfare with the devil and his agents. The devil is conscious of the fact that there is an on-going battle between his host and God’s people. **“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”** (1 Peter 5:8,9).

Furthermore, the subtlety of the enemy calls for constancy in the spiritual strength of the believer. The methods of the devil are so complex that a believer needs to put on the whole armour of God at all times. The devil is at work, night and day, trying to entrap, enslave and ruin the careless believer. A Christian youth who constantly lives the victorious Christian life needs not fear the devil.

Question 3: *From verses 13-18, mention spiritual resources for spiritual warfare.*

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (verse 13). The spiritual armors which the Lord gives His children to overcome the devil and his agents are listed below:

(1) **Scriptural Truth** (Ephesians 6:14): You need to remain unchanged and consistent as far as your commitment to

the truth of the word of God is concerned. Stand for the truth always. Wherever you may find yourself and whatever the majority may be standing for, stand for the truth. Put on the undiluted truth of God's word as you fasten your belt. Do not compromise. Compromise is sin!

(2) **Sanctification** (Ephesians 6:14): The importance of holy living cannot be over- stressed. We are commanded to put on the breastplate of righteousness. Holiness is a great weapon in spiritual warfare. When you live the sanctified life, the devil will be afraid of you. Holiness is a spiritual shield. It protects a believing youth from backsliding. You cannot maintain a consistent walk with God without living a consistent life of holiness. **"The righteous is delivered out of trouble..."** (Proverbs 11:8).

(3) **Soul winning** (Ephesians 6:15): To be victorious in spiritual warfare, soul winning is essential. The Lord commands us to be consistent in it. Your feet must be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. You will experience more victories when you are consistently winning souls. **"A true witness delivereth souls..."** (Proverbs 14:25).

(4) **Shield of Faith** (Ephesians 6:16): It is observed that the shield of faith is in the middle of the armour God makes available to every believer. It holds the first three and the last three together. Therefore, develop your faith always. None can live a consistent Christian life without walking by faith. **"And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens"** (Hebrews 11:32-34).

(5) **Salvation Helmet** (Ephesians 6:17): Sin leads to defeat. But freedom from sin in Christ, the Savior, gives victory over sin and Satan. It is the helmet of salvation that protects us from the arrow of the devil.

(6) **Sword of the Spirit** (Ephesians 6:17): The word of God is one of the powerful weapons for Christian youths to overcome any strategy of the devil. It is powerful, proven, and profitable. Therefore, if you read, study, meditate, hear and act on the word of God, victory is sure.

(7) **Supplication and Intercession** (Ephesians 6:18,19): Prayer is an important weapon for consistent Christian living. The Bible enjoins us to pray **“always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for saints”**. If you want to walk with God consistently, you need to pray frequently and fervently. It will keep your spiritual life fresh. It will enable you to keep your consecration. Christian youths who pray consistently will draw sufficient grace and strength from God to face the future. Pray until you cultivate the habit of praying. The command is: **“Pray without ceasing”** (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Examples of those who used these spiritual resources and won the battles of life were Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, Paul and Jesus Christ. You must take a decision and determine to fight the devil. You cannot live a consistent Christian life without having consistent victory over sin, self and Satan. It is through winning in the spiritual battle that you can maintain a consistent and constant walk with God to the end.

REQUEST FROM A SACRIFICIAL WORKER (Ephesians 6:19-24; Hebrews 13:18,19; Romans 15:30-33; 2 Corinthians 1:8-11; Philippians 1:19; Philemon 22)

Paul the apostle was a minister of God with great humility and sacrificial service. **“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”** (Acts 20:18,19). He is a model to us today in our service to the Lord. He had prayed for believers in Ephesians chapters one and two, on deep spiritual blessings. After he had

served others, he now requested the brethren to pray for him. **“And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel”** (verse 19).

“For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak” (verse 20). Prayer for Christian ministers is one of the greatest duty or service we can render to the Lord for them. Though believers are commanded to take care of their ministers, praying for them takes priority. The reasons Paul requested for their prayer were:

(1) to receive utterance from God to preach the gospel to sinners boldly (verse 19);

(2) to make known the mystery of the gospel of Christ (verse 19) and

(3) to have courage to speak as an ambassador of Christ (verse 20).

Today, it is the duty of the members of the church to pray for those who teach them the word of God. The more we pray for them, the better for us.

Question 4: *Why did Paul request for believers' prayer?*

“But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things” (verse 21). From this Scripture, Paul expressed his sincerity and made known his life for people to see and know his affairs. He had no secret affairs which he could not allow others to know about. **“But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience”** (2 Timothy 3:10). He then called on Tychicus, a beloved brother and minister of the Lord, to tell them things about him. How sincere are we before others? No wonder he challenged all believers, at that time and now, to follow him as he followed Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Furthermore, the coming of Tychicus was a blessing and comfort to the brethren. **“Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and**

that he might comfort your hearts” (verse 22). The secret of Tychicus’ effectiveness in God’s service was how he developed his spiritual life through prayer and the reading of the word of God. Another example of a minister who was beneficial to the church was Barnabas. **“Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord”** (Acts 11:23,24). Develop your spiritual life today and you will be useful tomorrow.

As he concluded this letter, he pronounced peace, love, grace and faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ on the brethren. This is what the Holy Spirit brings to all youths who study and obey this lesson. **“Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity”** Amen (verses 23,24).

LESSON 739

WORLDLINESS AND WORLDLY AMUSEMENTS

MEMORY VERSE: “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:1,2).

TEXT: 1 John 2:15-17

The world and the Church are parallel to each other. The Church is the invisible assembly of all redeemed souls, whose lifestyles, conduct, characters, dispositions and tastes are fully dictated by Christ. On the other side is the world, the pervasive evil system controlled by the devil and easily detected in the taste, lifestyle, character, disposition, language, dressing, amusement and recreation of its followers. The world is a system with changing values and fashions. The believer is expected to live a life of non- conformity to the world. **“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 12:2).

Question 1: *What is worldliness and worldly amusements?*

Worldliness is any act or attitude that is in line with the evil systems, practices, dressing or adornments of the world. Worldly amusement is the provision or enjoyment of worldly entertainments such as worldly music, dancing, parties, drinking, smoking, etc. Worldliness is evil and it pollutes the Christian youth. There is no meeting point between the evils of this world and the Church; hence, they are two opposing systems. The evil practices of the world must not be allowed to come into the Church. Where they have crept in unnoticed, they must be flushed out. Christ is coming for a pure Church without spot, wrinkle or any

such thing. The Church and her entire membership must be completely free from evil and worldly values and traditions. Therefore, the Bible says, **“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the father is not in him”** (1 John 2:15).

DESCRIPTION OF WORLDLINESS AND WORLDLY AMUSEMENTS (1 John 2:15-17; Isaiah 3:16-24; Matthew 24:37-39; Luke 17:26-30)

The Bible draws a picture of the world in its true color. But more than that, it declares in many ways that it is sensual, devilish, doomed and distorting.

Worldliness begins in the heart. It is a secret, inward liking and, later, a craving for the fancies and fashions of the world which are contrary to the standards of the word of God. It finally begins to show forth in the lifestyle of its victim. You become worldly when the people of the world (ungodly friends, colleagues, relations, neighbors, etc.) dictate and determine your taste in dressing and your heart begins to yearn after the sinful trends and contemporary fashions in the world. The Scripture says, **“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God”** (James 4:4).

Question 2: *How does worldliness begin?*

Neither the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ nor the epistles of the Apostles give license to the Christian to be worldly or to associate with people of the world in business or marriage. The believer who makes heaven his goal must separate himself from all ungodly practices and worldly amusements.

Question 3: *Mention some common ways worldliness and worldly amusements manifest among youths.*

Dressing is one area where worldliness in the heart speaks loudly and clearly. Christian youths should not dress like sinful youths of the world. The spirit that dictates the fashion of the world is that of the devil. It thrives on sinful passions or vices that inspire the opposite gender to lust and commit sin. This spirit that controls the fashions or

designs of worldly dressing, causes a continual digression from God, holiness and righteousness. However, a good personal appearance characterized by cleanliness and neatness is all a believer needs. At all times and in all places, decency and modesty of dressing should be our basic standard. Adornments copied from the world, which reflect the pride of life and the cravings of a carnal spirit are worldly and must be avoided like a plague. The guiding principle of a Christian is modesty and lowliness. **“Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand”** (Philippians 4:5).

Besides, there are some assemblies or gatherings that are essentially worldly and sinful. Christian youth must keep away from meetings that are held to foster the carnal desires of the flesh, inflame the mind and make it to ‘wash’ off godly sorrows that are necessary in preparing the heart for the word of God.

Trendy fashions, unspoken competitive social outlook, lust of the eyes and pride of life thrive in some social gatherings. Christian youths must not be found in such gatherings because it blows ‘cool air’ that quenches the ‘flame’ in the young believer. The Christian youth must also avoid worldly conversation, pursuit and ambition (Ephesians 5:3,4; 1 Samuel 8:19,20). The command of the Lord is: **“Abstain from all appearance of evil”** (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

DANGERS OF WORLDLINESS AND WORLDLY AMUSEMENTS (1 John 2:15-17; Isaiah 3:16-24; Zephaniah 1:8; James 3:15; 4:4)

Some Christian youths want to have the best of two worlds. They want all the privileges of God’s kingdom while they simultaneously hunger after all the glamour of the world. Such believers rationalize worldliness. They explain off fundamental truths and principles in the word of God. These are those who remove ancient landmarks and take away from the word of God (Revelation 22:18,19).

Question 4: *How do ‘modern Christian youths’ rationalize worldliness?*

Those who indulge and persist in worldly dressing and adornment, even after they have come to the knowledge of the truth, say their immodest dressing is designed to expand the kingdom of God. They claim that they join sinners in their worldly styles in order to invite them into the Kingdom. They eloquently say, "Join them to win them". To these, the Scripture admonished true Christian not to be **"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 12:2). Moreover, some say what they put on does not matter since salvation is in their hearts. But the truth is that if our hearts are saved and conformed to the Lord, our outward comportment will follow suit.

Worse still, some seeking desperately for a pretext and excuse to be like the world, assent that their role models are worldly gospel artistes or preachers. They have forgotten that Jesus taught that we should be like Him and not like any other man (Luke 14:26,27).

Modern technology, idleness of mind and a mad rush for money at the expense of the soul have led to all sorts of amusements and time-killers. This is a dangerous trend. Christian youths must beware!

Question 5: *What inherent dangers does worldliness pose to the individual Christian and the church at large?*

Worldliness is not only dangerous but deadly. Its effects are described in very negative terms in the Bible. **First**, the worldly Christian is described as an enemy of God (James 4:4). **Second**, worldliness leads to backsliding and compromise. One of the early signs of backsliding is a tendency towards the world (2 Timothy 4:10). **Third**, it leads to loss of conviction on serious biblical matters. **Fourth**, it corrupts the minds of children of God. **Fifth**, the presence and power of God would diminish or even disappear from the Church. **Sixth**, worldliness disallows the building of godly homes. **Seventh**, worldly amusements bring about carnal competition in the church. **Eighth**, it incurs the wrath of God. **Ninth**, its amusements weaken

the church and individual life as people spend precious time on vanities. When the membership of a church is given to amusements, little or no time is left for evangelism, visitation, follow-up and other services that have eternal value. **Tenth**, worldliness destroys the future of the church and makes her membership nominal Christians. It must, therefore, be avoided like poison.

DECISION AGAINST WORLDLINESS AND WORLDLY AMUSEMENTS (1 John: 3:15;17; Genesis 35:1-4; Deuteronomy 18:9; 22:5; Jeremiah 10:1,2; Romans 12:2)

Christian youths are in the world but not of the world. **“I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world”** (John 17:14).

Question 6: *What should be a Christian youth’s attitude to worldliness and worldly amusements?*

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:1). In view of the deadly consequences of worldliness and worldly amusements:

(1) we must separate and remain distinct from people whose affections and desires are worldly;

(2) we must steer clear of carnal festivities and things that are worldly (1 Corinthians 10:7);

(3) we must please God in everything we do. **“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God”** (1 Corinthians 10:31); and

(4) we must pray to be totally free from worldliness and worldly amusements. Remember that without holiness no man shall see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14).

LESSON 740

COSISTENT CHRISTIAN LIVING

MEMORY VERSE: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

TEXT: Genesis 5:22-24; 17:1; Ephesians 6:10-18

Decision determines destiny. Deciding to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is a very wonderful and rewarding experience in this life and eternity. However, consistently following Him to the end is what matters. Some youths begin well but end badly. A careful look at the prevailing situation around us reveals that Christian youths are becoming lukewarm. The reason for this may be due to their love which is waxing cold. The solution is consistent Christian living daily.

Question 1: *What is consistent Christian living?*

To live a consistent Christian life is to be unchanging over a long time. That is, you are consistent in your conviction about God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, the Scripture, hell, heaven, etc. The Scripture says, “**My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change: For their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruin of them both?**” (Proverbs 24:21,22). Examples abound in the Scriptures of those who walked with God to the end of their lives. Some of them are Enoch, Noah, David, Daniel, Timothy, Paul, Hezekiah and John the Beloved. You can also walk with God from today.

COMMAND TO WALK WITH GOD (Genesis 5:22; 17:1; Isaiah 30:21; Jeremiah 6:16; 1 John 2:2-6; Isaiah 35:9; 1 Kings 9:4,5; Joshua 22:5)

“**And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect**” (Genesis 17:1). The command of the Lord to every youth

is to come to Him and be saved; then continue to walk daily with Him till he enters His rest in heaven. **“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”** (Amos 3:3). The command to walk with God is not a physical one.

It means to give one's life to Christ by repenting of one's sin, confessing those sins to God directly and believing in the finished work of Christ on Calvary. **“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures”** (1 Corinthians 15:3,4).

Question 2: *In what specific areas does God expect us to walk with Him?*

Walking with God is interesting and practical. He expects us to walk: as children of light (1 John 1:7), honestly (1 Thessalonians 4:12), in newness of life (Romans 6:4), in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16), in love (Ephesians 5:2), in wisdom (Colossians 4:5), in truth (1 Kings 1:1-4), by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7), humbly (Micah 6:8) and with a perfect heart (2 Kings 20:3).

A Christian youth is on a journey to heaven. The devil may allow a youth to start the journey but he will do his best to stop him from making heaven. We are living in the last days and stand the danger of being unprepared for the coming of the Lord. We live in difficult or perilous times. Rebellion, backsliding, covetousness, pride, blasphemy, disobedience to parents, headiness, high-mindedness and examination malpractice characterize these days. **“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, ... lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn, away...”** (2 Timothy 3:1-5). How is it now? Have you lost your Christian experiences? What about your first love? Do you care about spiritual things now? Examine yourself! The first step to take in ensuring that one lives a consistent Christian life is to check up whether one's Christian experiences are still intact. Human character has no reservoir. The fact that you once lived an

acceptable life before God does not guarantee your being always acceptable before Him. There is nothing like once saved, forever saved. We are called by God to a life of consistent walk with Him. Therefore, if a Christian youth turns from holiness, sobriety, prayerfulness, zealousness and seriousness in soul-winning and begins to develop coldness in spiritual things, his chances of getting to heaven are doubtful (Ezekiel 18:24).

COURAGE TO WALK WITH GOD (Genesis 5:22; Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; 1Corinthians 15:56, 57; Luke 4:4)

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:10,11).

Question 3: *How can a Christian youth maintain a consistent walk with the Lord?*

Our text gives us the antidote¹ for backsliding and Lukewarmness. Firstly, we must be saved from sins. Secondly, we are enjoined to be strong in the Lord and make use of our divine ability. God’s power is strong enough to keep all His children from falling. It is the duty of every Christian youth to ensure that he is strong always. A wise believer will ensure that he does not have any careless moment. The devil knows the time to strike, especially when the Christian do not pray, read his Bible and do not renew his strength in the Lord. It is the will of God that believing youths be strong in the Lord every moment of their lives. Thirdly, we are encouraged to stand against the wiles of the evil. **“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against power, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places”** (Ephesians 6:12).

The aim of Satan and his agents is to wrestle or fight with Christian youths, weaken, overcome and make them ineffective. No Christian youth can afford to trifle with the devil and his agents. The believer is in constant warfare with the devil and his agents. The devil is conscious of the fact that there is an on-going battle between his host

and God's people. **“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”** (1 Peter 5:8,9).

Furthermore, the subtlety of the enemy calls for constancy in the spiritual strength of the believer. The methods of the devil are so complex that the believer needs to put overall armour of God always. The devil is at work night and day trying to entrap, enslave and ruin the careless believer. The Christian youth who constantly lives the victorious Christian life needs not fear the devil.

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Ephesians 6:13). The spiritual armour the Lord give His children to overcome the devil and his agents include:

(1) The Truth (Ephesians 6:14): The believer need to remain in the truth as he has been taught; uphold the truth always. Wherever he may find himself or whatever the majority may stand for, he should stand for the truth. This is what will keep him secured in Christ and free from error. He should not compromise because compromise is sin.

(2) Righteousness (Ephesians 6:14): Righteousness acts as both defensive and protective weapon. The commanded is to put on the breastplate of righteousness. Righteousness is a great weapon in the spiritual warfare. When you live the righteous life, the devil will be afraid of you. Righteousness is a spiritual shield. It protects a believing youth from backsliding. One cannot maintain a consistent walk with God without living a consistent life of righteousness. **“The righteous is delivered out of trouble...”** (Proverbs 11:8).

(3) Soul winning (Ephesians 6:15): Soul winning is essential to victory in the spiritual warfare. We are commanded to be consistent in soul winning. Preaching the gospel of peace is the duty of all Christians. When you consistently engage in winning souls, it guarantees constant victory in Christ.

“A true witness delivereth souls...” (Proverbs 14:25).

(4) Shield of Faith (Ephesians 6:16): In the middle of the pieces of the armour is the shield of faith which God has made available to every believer. It holds the first three and the last three weapons together. Therefore, develop your faith always. None can live a consistent Christian life without walking by faith. Hebrews 11:32- 34).

(5) Salvation from sins (Ephesians 6:17): Sin leads to defeat while freedom from it gives victory over sin and Satan. It is the helmet of salvation that protect from the arrow of the devil.

(6) Sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17): For a Christian to experience daily triumph through Christ, he needs the word of God. This Word is powerful, proven, purposeful, practical, and profitable. The Christian should read, study, mediate, hear and act on the word of God for daily victorious living.

(7) Prayer and Supplication (Ephesians 6:18, 19): Prayer is an indispensable weapon for consistent Christian living. We are commanded to pray **“always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for saints”**. To walk with God consistently, one needs to pray frequently and fervently. Prayer will keep one’s spiritual life fresh. It will enable one to keep his consecration. Christian youths who pray consistently will draw sufficient grace and strength from God to face the future. Pray until you cultivate the habit of praying. The command is, **“Pray without ceasing”** (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Question 4: Recall and explain five spiritual armour Christian youths must put on for spiritual warfare?

CONSECRATION TO WALK WITH GOD (Genesis 5:24; Psalm 16:8; 26:11; 101:1-3; 116:9; 68:10-13)

“And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him” (Genesis 5:24). It takes great decision, determination and discipline to walk with God consistently to the end. You must count the cost if you drop by the way side. Do not allow anything, person or the devil to

make you backslide. **“But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me”** (Psalm 26:11).

When we walk with God consistently, we enjoy:

- His prosperity (Genesis 24:40),
- peace (Malachi 2:5, 6),
- provision (Psalm 84:11),
- protection (Proverbs 2:7),
- preservation (Isaiah 35:8-10),
- power (2 Corinthians 12:9) and
- presence (Genesis 5:24).

Finally, there is great gain in consistency. The Christian youth who lives the consistent Christian life will enjoy victory always, be established in the faith, live a fruitful Christian life and will be ready to meet the Lord at the rapture. **“But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved”** (Matthew 24:13). Go in the strength of the Lord and live a consistent Christian life for your Lord.

LESSON 741

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

MEMORY VERSE: “And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory” (Mark 13:26).

TEXT: Mark 13:24-37; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10

The Second Coming of Christ is one of the cardinal doctrines of the Bible that brings relief to every true believer in this world of troubles, trials and hostility. It is as literal and visible as His going away. He is coming to execute judgment upon the ungodly. He will also, set up His kingdom and reign on this present earth for a thousand years. **“And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven”** (Acts 1:9-11).

The greatest event that will precede the Second Coming of Christ is the Rapture. The Rapture should, however, not be confused with the Second Coming. Specifically, the Second Coming refers to Christ’s Coming to the earth to live as He did in the first coming, to be seen by every eye. In the Rapture, Christ will not come to the earth, but stop in the air. It is not every eye that will see Him.

Question 1: *Differentiate between the Rapture and the Second Coming of Christ.*

CERTAINTY OF CHRIST’S SECOND COMING (Mark 13:24-27; John 14:1-3; 1Thessalonians 5:1-4; Revelation 1:7; 2:25; 3:11; 16:15; 22:7,12,20)

Christ’s Second Coming is prophetic. It was predicted by many prophets in the Old Testament and by the apostles in the New Testament. Christ also talked more

about His return. **Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days**" (Acts 3:24). Prophecy is the prediction about future occurrences. It is telling, beforehand, what is certain to happen. It is divine revelation, foreseeing what must surely happen. Youths must beware of false prophets and prophecies flying about in these last days. In the Old Testament alone, over 1,500 passages referred to the Second Coming of Christ. Also, in the New Testament, one out of every twenty-five verses directly refers to His Second Coming. The Lord Jesus Himself mentioned His Second Coming twenty-one times. In addition, in the New Testament, there are over fifty exhortations to believers to be ready for the return of the Lord. Every time the first coming is mentioned once, His Second Coming is mentioned eight times.

Question 2: What assures the Christian youth that Christ will surely come again?

"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20). The word of God sufficiently reveals that Christ's return is imminent. He came the first time in humiliation; He will be coming the second time in exaltation. He came the first time to give us grace; He will be coming the second time with glory. He came the first time and was tossed to and fro by some earthly heathen rulers. He will be coming the second time as the Ruler to rule the world with a rod of iron.

CLEAR SIGNS OF CHRIST'S SECOND COMING (Mark 13:28-31; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Matthew 24:4-13; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54)

The exactitude with which the old-time prophecies concerning the first coming of Christ were fulfilled points to the infallibility of the Scriptures and to the certainty of those prophecies concerning his Second Coming. Prophecies on His virgin birth, details of His earthly life, His death, burial and resurrection were all fulfilled to the letter.

The Second Coming of Christ is a fact that has been confirmed in the Scriptures by the prophets, the Lord

Himself, angels and the apostles. **“So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors”** (Mark 13:29). The following are the signs Christian youths should watch for as they wait for His coming: **(1)** religious deception and false claims; **(2)** multiplication of false prophets and teachers; **(3)** violence; **(4)** famine; **(5)** pestilences and diseases; **(6)** persecution of the believers; **(7)** backsliding and Lukewarmness. These and many others will signal His return.

It must be understood that the Second Coming of Christ has a purpose different from the Rapture. The Rapture is to receive home all saints both dead and alive. There is a space of seven years between the Rapture and the Second Advent of Christ. The Second Coming of Christ will take place at the end of the Great Tribulation. At His coming, all eyes shall see Him because He will come visibly as when He was received to heaven before the disciples. He will come with the saints (i) To execute judgment upon the ungodly (Jude 14,15) (ii) To set up His kingdom (Revelation 20:2,3).

Question 3: *Point out the signs that will signal the Second Coming of the Lord?*

PREPARATION FOR CHRIST’S SECOND COMING
(Mark 13:32-37; Matthew 24:42; 25:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:6,23; Revelation 3:11)

In view of the imminence of the Second Coming of Christ, Christian youths must be prepared and ready. Sinners must repent of their sins and turn to the Lord by faith. Christian youths must **(a)** ensure that their Christian experiences are intact; **(b)** watch and pray; **(c)** be holy and blameless; **(d)** be busy in the work of the Lord; **(e)** guard against last days deceptions and compromise; **(f)** take heed to the warning of Christ; **(g)** be sober, spiritually alert and self-controlled. The Lord is coming. **“Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them”** (Luke 12:37).

Question 4: *How can we prepare for the Lord’s return?*

