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STUDY 183

THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST

Text: Philippians 2:9-11

To be lord is to be ruler; and lordship means supreme authority, ownership or having absolute control as kings lord it over their subjects. It is the kind described by the Lord Jesus when He said "**...Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and their great ones exercise authority upon them**" (Mark 10:42). Kings, in the Bible days, had vast amount of power; their word was absolute. They did according to their own will and none could check them. "**If it pleased the king, let there go a royal commandment from him and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered ...**" (Esther 1:19).

The same lordship is applied to Christ as the Owner and Governor of the whole earth. Jesus is not only a King; He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He is the Christ, the anointed One. The Lord Jesus Christ is unique in that He is the I am, the ever present Lord. His birth is unique, He had no earthly Father; He was born of a virgin; His earthly life was unique; He was without sin; His death was unique - it was redemptive and substitutionary; His resurrection was unique - resurrection was the proof of his sinless life and redemptive death.

After His resurrection, He asserted that all power in heaven and earth is given unto Him "**And what is the exceeding greatness of his power ... which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places**" (Ephesians 1:19,20). **This position is obviously the highest possible honour. All glory, power, honour and dominion belong to our Christ as Christ is declared to have authority over angels, authorities and powers.**

Christ's exaltation puts Him in position to deal with man's problems. Name any problem - sin, sickness, disease, affliction, possession by evil spirit, oppression and any other that may be lording it over any man. As He rises up, they all vanish away; for He speaks and it comes to pass.

As members of the house fellowship, we will individually look into our personal life, marital life, christian life and business life. We will all call on the Lord of lords and King of kings to arise and lord it over all problems. He is from above and He is above them all.

1. Explain what is meant by lordship as exercised by earthly kings. _____

2 (a) From the following references explain the position of believers now and in eternity.

(i) Revelation 1:5, 6. _____

(ii) I Corinthians 6:3 _____

(iii) 2 Timothy 2:12 _____

(b) What steps should sinners take before having these privileges?

3. Explain ways Christ exercised His Lordship from the following references:

i) Matthew 8:16 _____

(ii) Matthew 17:14-18 _____

(iii) Matthew 8:23-27 _____

(iv) John 8:10, 11; Matthew 9:6 _____

(v) Colossians 1:16. _____

ACTIVITIES:

1. *Highlight various problems in the lives of our class.*
2. *Let us call on the Lord of lords and King of kings to arise for our help.*

**STUDY 184
PREACH THE WORD**

Text: II Timothy 4:1-5.

Every believer is commanded to be a herald for the Lord Jesus Christ. We are to proclaim the truth that He was crucified for the sins of the whole world; we must preach the doctrine that there is no salvation except by faith in Him; we must tell the people of their fault and then in love, with patience and long-suffering bring them to repentance.

This word of God is powerful, and therefore, able to bring life to the spiritually dead. It is "**sharper than any two-edged sword**", and, as such able to pierce through the heart to reveal the thoughts and the intentions of men. When the word is preached, it has power to cleanse from sin and to sanctify the heart, bringing to submission to the will of God the rebellious heart, thereby producing spiritual growth. Preaching the word was the major preoccupation of our Lord, Jesus Christ, during His earthly ministry. He declared "**The spirit of the Lord is upon me,**

because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor"; he said **"Repent; for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand"**. In the course of His Ministry, He sent out His disciples **"to preach the Kingdom of God"** and at His departing He expressly commanded His disciples and indeed believers to go into **"all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"**. And as Paul the Apostle enjoined, we must preach the word **"in season, out of season"**; in time of prosperity or adversity when opportunities are available or when difficulties are being placed on our way.

The task is urgent. Many are ignorant of the truth and are waiting for their spiritual eyes to be opened. There are many others who had once had encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ, but now, are being hired into error by false teachers and prophets. Multitudes are dying daily without Christ and are going to eternity in hell. Today, the love of money, pleasure and material possession is greater than ever before. And, we are in end times and Christ will soon come to rapture His saints and then repentance from sin will become difficult. What is more? Agents of the devil are active in hindering the word from being preached. The conditions today require us to preach the word with zeal, diligence, and fervency.

- 1. What is the believer's responsibility to sinners around him/her? _____

- 2. Why is it urgent that this responsibility must be discharged? _____

- 3. In these references, what are the characteristics of the word? _____

 - (i) 2 Timothy 3:16 _____
 - (ii) Psalm 119:105 _____
 - (iii) John 15:3 _____
 - (iv) John 17:17; Psalm 119:7 _____
 - (v) Isaiah 55:10,11 _____
 - (vi) Hebrews 4:12 _____
 - (vii) Isaiah 40:8; Luke 6:17 _____

STUDY 185

BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD

Text: John 1:29-36

The Jews enquired from John whether he was Christ or Elijah. To both questions he said, No, but that **"there standeth among you whom ye know not"**. His testimony that day pointed to the expected Messiah and the mission He had come to accomplish for the Jews.

John's description of Christ as **"the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world"** was well understood by the Jews. They well remembered the Paschal lamb, the blood of which had to be sprinkled upon their door posts to secure their deliverance from the destroying angels; the daily sacrifices of lambs every morning, evening and the sin offering as commanded by God to be offered unto Him **'for without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins'**.

As **"it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins"** (Hebrews 10:4) so Christ offered Himself to bear our sins. As a Lamb, He was brought to the slaughter to be offered as a propitiation for our sins. By this sacrifice, He paved the way for our reconciliation with God and obtained pardon and eternal redemption for all those that will repent and believe the Gospel.

John emphatically testified that Christ is the Lamb of God, God's only choice for the redemption of man. He is the only mediator between God and man. **"And by him, all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses"** (Acts 13:39).

There is no other way to be at peace with God and become a member of His family than through the Lamb of God. For **"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).

Unlike the lambs sacrificed by the Jews for their sins (which was limited in scope), Christ, the gift of God for the entire world, is the Lamb that was sacrificed to take away the sins of the world. All men and women from all races and tribes stand to be forgiven when there is genuine repentance and faith in God. Our primary duty, therefore, is to come to Him in faith as we are, and He will abundantly pardon. 1. What do we learn from John's testimony of Jesus, according to John 1:29,36?

2. What benefits do we have through Christ's sacrifice?

(i) Matthew 26:28 _____

(ii) Hebrews 9:14 _____

(iii) I John 1:7 _____

(iv) Romans 5:9 _____

- (v) I Peter 1:18,19 _____
3. Find out from the following references why Christ's death was necessary.
- (i) Hebrews 9:22 _____
- (ii) Hebrews 10:3,4 _____
- (iii) I Timothy 2:5,6 _____

STUDY 186

THE ARMOUR OF GOD

Text: Ephesians 6:10-18

For every believer, God has set standards for his/her personal life, their life in the fellowship of the christian community and for life within their family circle. And, God wants us to remember that we cannot live such life without fighting a spiritual battle. To fight the battle successfully, we need the spiritual strength supplied by God alone.

The command to put on the whole armour of God is an indicator that, the spiritual battle against the devil and all the powers of darkness will be fierce and continuous. The attacks from the enemy are usually directed against the spirit, mind, body, family, business, etc. of the believer, tempting him to go into sin, to love the things of this world, have evil thoughts, murmur against God, doubt the power of God as a result of delayed answers to his prayers, lose faith in the promises of God to be proud, and fear the devil. Moreover, the attacks take the form of affliction with sickness, poverty, collapse of business, opposition from friends, relations, employers, accidents, etc. But the armour of God is a guarantee for victory for the believer.

The armour of God consists of the girdle of truth which represents a clear understanding of and sincerity with the word of God; the breastplate of righteousness which is our entire obedience to the word of God; our **"feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace"** which means that we must have a strong determination to work steadily with God in all His counsels. Again, our faith must be our shield to protect us from the violent attacks of the devil which come from all directions. We must also wear the helmet of salvation. Our salvation experience will make us have hope and trust in God and this will sustain us even in time of discouragement. Besides, we have to possess the spiritual sword, our offensive weapon against the devil. In addition, we must persevere and be constant in prayer.

Finally, we are to face the enemy head-on without turning our back on him. No wonder, there is no part of the armour that protects the back against the dart of the enemy. When we resist the devil with the whole armour of God on us, he will flee from us.

1. From the following passages why must we put on the whole armour of God?

(i) I Peter 5:8 _____

(ii) John 10:10 _____

(iii) Matthew 13:19; Luke 8:12 _____

(iv) II Corinthians 4:4 _____

2. Mention the pieces of armour of God and their significance _____

3. What assurance of victory do we have over the devil according to the passage below?

(i) James 4:7 _____

(ii) John 19:30 _____

(iii) II Corinthians 10:4,5 _____

(iv) I John 5:4 _____

(v) Luke 10:19 _____

(vi) Romans 8:35,37 _____

(vii) Revelation 15:2 _____

(viii) Luke 22:31,32 _____

(ix) I Corinthians 10:13 _____

(x) Romans 16:20 _____

STUDY 187

TRIUMPH IN ADVERSITIES

Text: I Samuel 30:1-8, 17-19

Life is made up of various seasons and times: days and nights; raining season and dry season; and days of shedding tears and days of rejoicing and laughing. Our text shows the experience of a saint who grappled with problems and adversity - David. And like David, every man born of woman is born into adversity. Job, who also passed through the crucible of adversity rightly said "**Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of troubles**" (Job 14:1). God was boasting of Job for his uprightness, and yet, he was in trouble. Remember the Lord Jesus Christ: "**This is my only begotten Son in whom I am well pleased**" and yet, Christ was directed by the Holy Ghost into the wilderness to be tried. Saints are often troubled not because they are sinful but because God has a purpose for allowing adversities in their lives.

We are living in days of unparalleled troubles. The society is bedevilled with negative circumstances that lead many unstable souls to wonder why all the evils. We should, however, remember that Paul has said that at the latter days perilous time shall come. Today, nations, families and individuals are all passing through hard times. The situation will remain the same if not worse as time goes on. It is a national problem which the king on the throne, the rich, the poor, the educated and illiterate, the urban-dwellers and peasant farmers in the suburbs are all passing through. No one is exempted. These are days that try men's souls.

Political and social pressure, like unemployment, retrenchment, inflation, poverty, insecurity, oppression, famine and heart failure are a few adverse situations we face. No peace in many hearts, no food, and getting legitimate shelter is getting out of reach of the common man. It was once said of Lazarus "**He that thou (Jesus) loveth is sick**". The case is the same today; the beloved of Christ are passing through serious calamities.

Many, as a result of sore persecution, are being moved away from the faith, the promises of God and from the experiences they earlier had with God. "**If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small**" (Proverbs 24:10). If a tree is firm, why should it fear the storm?

In adversity, we should, first of all, search our hearts and not witch-hunt anybody. David did not accuse Saul or Absalom but he examined his heart.

David did not accept defeat and was not ready to remain cast down. He encouraged himself in the Lord. To you believers who are being troubled, lay the worrying and anxiety at Jesus' feet. Rest in God; God has promised us that when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him (Isaiah 59:19). We are to hold fast to the first love and remain steadfast and accept no defeat. After the adversity, we will come out revived and

the glory will be to the Lord. Let us keep on pouring the burdens in our heart to God in prayer.

1. (a) Is adversity a sign of disfavour of God to believers? _____

(b) Why does God allow troubles on His children? _____

2. When we endure, what will be the end result of adversity from the following references?

(i) Genesis 50:20 _____

(ii) Exodus 11-12 _____

(iii) Deuteronomy 8:15-16 _____

(iv) Isaiah 61:2-3 _____

(v) I Peter 4:13-14 _____

3. Mention 4 points our response/attitude should be during adversity.

(i) _____

(ii) _____

(iii) _____

(iv) _____

Mention 5 other saints in the Bible that passed through great adversities.

(a) _____ (b) _____

(c) _____ (d) _____

(e) _____

STUDY 188

THE GOOD NEWS

Text: Isaiah 53:4-12

Good news brings joy - the joy of someone who had been standing trial for his life now discharged and acquitted; the joy of a person who had been imprisoned against his will but now set free; the joy of a debtor who had been harassed and tormented by his creditor but whose huge debt was unexpectedly paid by a kind-hearted person.

Man was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). But when man sinned, he lost the attributes of God and became a slave to the devil. Moreover, death, sickness, deprivation, fear, defeat, hopelessness and troubles came into his life, and he was doomed to everlasting separation from God and eternity in the lake of fire. But the coming of Jesus Christ, His suffering and death on the Cross, brought man deliverance from the bondage of the devil; reconciliation with God, victory over sin, death, and all adverse circumstances of life; opened the door for the inflow of the blessings of God; and brought hope of eternal life with God. It is not surprising that the angel of the Lord, announcing the birth of Christ, declared **"behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people"** (Luke 2:10) and Paul wrote **"there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself as a ransom for all, to be testified in due time"** (I Timothy 2:5,6).

Today, there are many who are ignorant of the good news of their redemption through Christ, and therefore, do not experience the joy of salvation. The believer, therefore, has a responsibility to proclaim the 'Good News,' and the sinner's part is to believe it, repent from his/ her sins, confess them to God and receive Christ as his/her Saviour, for **"as many as received him (Jesus Christ) to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name"** (John 1:12).

1. What is meant by the "Good News"? _____

2. What do we learn from the following references?

(i) Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:23 _____

(ii) Isaiah 57:20, 21 _____

(iii) Romans 2:9 _____

(iv) John 10:10a _____

(v) I Corinthians 8:9,10 _____

- (vi) Colossians 1:13 _____
- (vii) Colossians 1:21,22 _____
- (viii) Ephesians 3:17-19 _____
- (ix) John 14:1-3 _____
- (x) Luke 4:18 _____

3. (a) What is the responsibility of a believer to a sinner? _____

(b) What should be the attitude of a sinner to the Good News?

STUDY 189

MARKS OF THE NEW LIFE

Text: 1 John 3:1-10

The greatest thing that could happen to anyone on earth is to have the power of sin destroyed in his/her life. Sin enslaves, and anyone who commits sin, is a servant of sin (John 8:34). But when we become new creatures in Christ through repentance, **"old things are passed away" in our lives and "all things are become new."**

It is a contradiction for anyone born of God to live in sin, for **"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). Anyone that has the new life from God has power over outward sin of every kind, over every evil word and work. This is the first evidence of the new life.

Another mark of the new life is love: the love of God that is shed abroad our hearts by the Holy Ghost. First, we notice that we start to love God and the things of God. A thirst and hunger for intimate fellowship with God is created within us by this love. We find no satisfaction in anything that God does not approve of and we always seek to know God's mind to ensure we are not deceived by the devil.

As we begin to love God, we begin to obey the commandments of God. Christ becomes our example in the way we love. We love every soul created by God like

ourselves, including our enemies and those who **"despitefully use us and persecute us"**.

Love for God and our neighbours make the preaching of the gospel an indispensable duty. Having been in the dark before, we love to share with others what we have found - the new life. We start to see the need to urgently pull to rescue those still living in sins. We are daily consumed with the zeal of God and committed to the salvation of others.

Those truly born of the Spirit seek the things of the spirit. Their affection is centred **"on things of the spirit"** and **"on things above not on things on the earth"**. They neither neglect prayer and the daily reading of the scriptures nor allow anything to hinder them from regular fellowship with people of like precious faith.

1. Explain how one can have a new life _____

2. Find out from the following passages the state of sinners:

- (a) John 8:34 _____
- (b) Isaiah 59:7,8 _____
- (c) Ephesians 4:17,18 _____
- (d) Romans 8:7,8 _____
- (e) Ephesians 2:1 _____

3. What are the characteristics of the new life?

- (a) I John 4:7,8 _____
- (b) I John 3:8,9 _____
- (c) Hebrews 10:25 _____
- (d) Joshua 1:8 _____
- (e) 2 Corinthians 5:19 _____

STUDY 190

THE CONDITION FOR CHRISTIAN SECURITY

Text: Hebrews 3:6-19

Many people have been led to the error of "once saved forever saved", usually called 'eternal security'. From Genesis to Revelation, we have warnings from God against possible forfeiture of membership in Christ's household. Phrases like "turning from God," "turning to evil", "turning to satan", "going back", "turning back to the world", and "turning from first love" abound in the scriptures. A believer is not, therefore, unconditionally saved. The journey of faith, once started, must be lived without wavering or relaxing our hold until the very close of our earthly pilgrimage.

Our text reminded and warned the Hebrew believers seriously. It called them to remembrance that their fathers honoured Moses and, at first, followed him, and for which reason, they were recipients of God's favour. But they soon murmured and turned to go back into Egypt; no more accepting the leadership of Moses and God. For which cause God also rejected them and their carcasses fell in the wilderness. They started out on the journey towards Canaan but regrettably, they never got there.

A believer who is following the Lord Jesus but is tempted to rebel and turn back into sin stands the chance of losing the hope of eternal life. **"When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity ... he shall die in his sin and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered"** (Ezekiel 3:20). Apart from losing eternal life, such a backslider is exposed to satanic oppression. He/she would be plunged into confusion. Peace and joy would also elude him/her. Again, fear and insecurity would set in. That is not all; a backslider could also become an apostate.

The possibility of falling from grace should make us undergo daily and thorough examination of our lives with an eye on taking care of the little foxes in our lives. We should watch and pray continually; keep fresh spiritually; maintain fellowship with people of the same faith; follow the injunctions of the Bible strictly; and cleave unto God. Sometime ago, a woman who was about to die gave a Bible to her son saying "This Book will take away sin from you or sin will take away this Book from you". **"Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee"** (Psalm 119:11).

1. (a) Explain what is meant by "once saved ever saved". _____

(b) Is christian security conditional or unconditional? _____

2. From the following references identify a word or group of words that suggest the possibility of losing the grace of God.

(i) Hebrews 10:38. _____

(ii) Deuteronomy 6:12. _____

(iii) Joshua 24:20. _____

(iv) Revelation 2:4. _____

(v) Galatians 2:18. _____

3. From the following references what are the causes of backsliding?

(i) Matthew 5:28. _____

(ii) I Timothy 6:9,10. _____

(iii) Psalm 106:13,14. _____

(iv) Deuteronomy 8:11-14. _____

(v) Matthew 13:20,21. _____

4. Read Hosea 14:1-7 and explain briefly the promises of God to a backslider who returns to God. _____

STUDY 191

THE CALL TO PERFECTION

Text: Matthew 5:43-48.

God's standard over the ages for those who will walk with Him has always been high. When He called Abraham, He commanded him "**Walk before me and be thou perfect**" (Genesis 17:1). To the nation Israel, he also commanded "**Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God**" (Deuteronomy 18:13). Christ's expectation and standard for us is the same. "**Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect**"

True enough, the world is full of evils and corruption; but the fact is that, it has been so since the fall of man. Enoch, Joseph, Daniel, etc. all lived at the time the spiritual climate around them was not conducive to a perfect walk with God, yet, they lived a life pleasing unto God.

Satan will want to make us believe that our disposition and the age we live in are so peculiar; our circumstances at home or at school or in the factory or office are so disagreeable and difficult that it is impossible to live holily. It is so for those who are yet to be sanctified, but it is different when our heart is circumcised and made pure. Holiness makes us masters of our circumstances instead of servants. The impatience, jealousy, envy, lust and murmuring are replaced with patience, love, generosity, humility, charity and thanksgiving.

The call to perfection does not imply exemption either from ignorance or mistakes or infirmities or temptations. Like those before us, we will have our own share of all these. There are many things we do not understand now but which we will understand by and by. "**What I do thou knowest not now: but thou shalt know hereafter**" (John 13:7). We will also make our mistakes (not sins) because we can only be perfect in the heart and not in the head. Job made his mistakes but still lived a holy life. Paul had his infirmities but lived holily before God, Christ was also tempted but "**did not sin neither was guile found in his mouth**".

A compelling reason, among others, why every believer should walk perfectly before God is because God our Father is perfect and He demands perfection from us, "**Can two walk together, except they be agreed?**" asked Amos, Amos 3:3. As light and darkness do not mix so also a righteous and holy God cannot walk with the impure. "**But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation. Because it is written, Be ye holy for I am holy**" (I Peter 1:15,16).

1. Why should a christian be perfect before God?

- (a) Matthew 5:48. _____
- (b) Titus 2:14 _____
- (c) Hebrews 12:14 _____

(d) Deuteronomy 10:12,13. _____

(e) I Peter 1:15,16 _____

2. What lessons can we learn from the following passages?

(a) Job 1:20-22. _____

(b) 2 Corinthians 12:10; I Thessalonians 2:10 _____

(c) I Peter 2:21-23 _____

3. What are the benefits of living a holy life? _____

STUDY 192

"IF ANY WOULD NOT WORK"

Text: 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12.

Much attention is given to dealing with the problem of idleness in the Bible both in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Right from the first book of the Bible - Genesis, God has said "**In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread**" (Genesis 3:19). Earlier on, God had put Adam in the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

God Himself was not idle, as we can gather from the six days when He created the heaven and earth. We are told He rested on the seventh day after six days of hard labour. In the incarnate Son of God, we also see a picture of industry. Jesus, in his youthful days, busied himself with his carpentry work. He was quite known as carpenter and the son of a carpenter (Mark 6:3).

In the light of the above, we then wonder why some so-called believers are idle and lazy. The attitude of loafing, refusing to work, avoiding one's duties and meddling with other people's businesses are diametrically opposed to the teaching of the word of God and Christ who we profess to follow. It is an abuse of

our religion as we have not so learned Christ. Neither is it after the tradition we received, from the early Church. It is a reproach to the gospel which we are commanded to adorn by words and deeds. Thus, we give room for enemies of the gospel to speak evil of the gospel.

A few of the idle brethren often take advantage of the Church's programme, depending on the church to maintain them. This attitude is wrong, grossly so. They should work and earn money so that they will not always be on the receiving side. **"I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak... It is more blessed to give than to receive"** (Acts 20:35).

Idle "brethren" exerts a negative impact on the industrious ones. Hence, we are warned to withdraw from any association with them as evil communications corrupt good manners. Someone has rightly said "Show me your friend and I will tell you the type of person you are". However, a balance has to be struck between those who are lazy and those who are really in need in the house fellowship. Such needy brethren should be helped from time to time. **"You have the poor always with you"**, says our Master, Jesus.

1. (a) Mention 3 reasons why idleness is not of God.

- (i) _____
- (ii) _____
- (iii) _____

(b) Mention 5 gainful jobs unemployed brothers or sisters can do in our locality.

- (i) _____ (ii) _____
- (iii) _____ (iv) _____
- (v) _____

2. What are the peculiar attitudes of those who are idle from the following references?

- (i) 2 Thessalonians 3:6 _____
- (ii) 2 Thessalonians 3:11 _____
- (iii) I Timothy 5:13 _____
- (iv) Proverbs 20:4 _____
- (v) Proverbs 24:33,34 _____

3. What should be our attitude to those who are lazy and idle?

(2 Thessalonians 3:14, 15) _____

STUDY 193

HAVE COMPASSION ON THEM

Text: Matthew 9:36-38.

Each day brings the world closer to the end of this age and to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Iniquity abounds in the world and the love of many for power, position and material possession rather than for the word of God is waxing stronger and stronger. There are multitudes that profess to be christians but who have never had personal experience with Christ. They are ardent church goers and boast of their self-righteousness but they are blind to the truth and are being led by ministers that are spiritually blind too.

The desire for pleasure rather than for God has gripped many people. Yet Christ said "**As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away**" (Luke 17:26, 27). Today, many false prophets and teachers have arisen and many fake christian churches have sprung up deceiving ignorant and confused people into errors and cults, thereby producing wide-spread hypocrisy. Of a truth, the scriptures say "**the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not of famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord**" (Amos 8:11).

Out of the world population of nearly six billion, only about one billion profess to be christians and majority of them are nominal christians. There are multitudes of others that have not even heard who Jesus Christ is! Here in our country, only a very small fraction of the fifty million christians are true believers, yet, God will

judge every man. Time after time, Christ warned of judgment: **"The Son of man shall send forth His angels and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth"** (Matthew 13:41, 42).

Every passing minute, no less than eighty- five people in the world die. And, majority of these are going to face the fiery judgment, wrath and indignation. Not willing that anyone should perish, Jesus Christ commands, **"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"** (Mark 16:15). As Christ had compassion on the sinners, so He wants us to show compassion to the perishing world around us.

- 1. Why must believers show compassion to sinners?
 - (i) Matthew 9:36 _____
 - (ii) Luke 17:28-30 _____
 - (iii) Job 20:5 _____
 - (iv) Hebrews 9:27 _____
 - (v) Revelation 6:15-17; 20:12-15 _____

2. How do believers show compassion? _____

3. What are the consequences of believers' failure in this responsibility?
Ezekiel 3:17, 18 _____

STUDY 194

FROM SINNER TO SAINT

Text: Luke 7:36-50

During His earthly ministry, Christ seized every opportunity He had to disclose His mission "**... to call the sinners to repentance**" (Matthew 9:13). One of such opportunities is the one in our text. He had honoured an invitation by a Pharisee to dine in his house.

In the process, an uninvited guest, a woman known by all to be a sinner came in "**and stood at His feet behind Him weeping and began to wash his feet with tears**". Unlike many today, who will be ashamed to heed an altar call or confess their sins in prayer to God either in the church or at the house fellowship, the public knowledge of her sinful life was not sufficient to restrain her from publicly seeking pardon and forgiveness from the Lord.

She received pardon and forgiveness from the Lord because "**the Lord is nigh unto them that are of broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit**" (Psalm 34:18). Her sins which were many and public were forgiven and forgotten. She came to the presence of the Lord as a sinner but she left His presence as a saint! What a transformation!

The attitude of Simon the Pharisee is what many display today. They are quick to see the mote that is in their brother's eye but would not see the beam in their own eyes. They are quick to condemn the adulterous life of others but excuse the cheating, malice, gossip, bitterness, hatred, etc. that they harbour in their lives. Those whose evils are yet uncovered are usually the first to pass judgment on those who have been caught and brought to book. Remember, it takes only one sin to make a person a sinner!

The Pharisee in his ignorance called the woman a sinner whilst the Bible declares "**all have sinned and come short of the glory of God**" (Romans 3:23). Self-righteousness has been the greatest barrier to many in receiving salvation from the Lord. Those who depend on water Baptism, fasting, payment of tithes and offerings or other religious activities as their passport to heaven will be disappointed on the last day. All these are good but none of them can replace "**godly sorrow that worketh repentance to salvation**".

No matter how dirty in sin we are, Christ has promised "**... and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out**". Deliverance from the power of darkness and translation into the kingdom of Christ is the greatest miracle that can ever happen to man.

1. Why was the woman in our text forgiven her sins? _____

2. What hinders some people from getting saved?
 - (a) Revelation 3:17 _____
 - (b) Proverbs 30:12 _____
 - (c) Luke 18:11,12 _____
 - (d) John 9:41 _____
 - (e) Job 33:9 _____

3. How does a sinner become a saint?
 - (a) Psalm 34:18 _____
 - (b) Luke 18:13 _____
 - (c) Proverbs 28:13 _____
 - (d) John 1:12 _____
 - (e) Romans 3:24 _____

STUDY 195

QUALIFICATION FOR VINEYARD WORKERS

Text: 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

The christian worker carries a great responsibility in the Church. To him/her is committed the **"faithful word as he has been taught"** so that he may be able to teach, exhort and counsel others also. With others, he/her administers the church and serves the body of Christ. In consequence of his duty, he/she deserves respect and obedience of the members of the Church. In our Church, such worker may be a house fellowship leader, a zonal leader, a women representative, a member of the choir, an usher, a children church worker, etc. His/her life is a mirror for other people to see themselves and shapen their christian lives. Through his lifestyle and activities, he helps to prepare others for heaven. In this wise, **"we are labourers together with God"** in His vineyard (1 Corinthians 3:9; II Corinthians 6:1). For one therefore to desire this kind of responsibility is a noble and holy ambition.

The life of the christian worker is of great importance. His/her personal character, christian experiences, general reputation and abilities play a very significant role in the numerical and spiritual growth of the church. He must be

'unblameable' and 'unreprovable' in all things. His/her conduct in private and in public must be such that cannot be accused of any evil both by believers and unbelievers. His/her desire for the work in the vineyard must not be debated by financial gain or material reward. He/she must be gentle and not contentious.

At home, he must not only be a monogamist but must also be faithful to his/her spouse, keeping his children well in the fear of the Lord. And, in the Church, he/she must show maturity, care and vigilance over the congregation.

To be able to manifest these qualities, the christian worker must have been genuinely born- again, thoroughly sanctified, experienced the baptism in the Holy Ghost, committed and consecrated to serve the Lord. He/she must daily live a life of prayer, studying and meditating in the word of God and regular fellowship with fellow believers.

1. Who is a christian worker? _____

2. Why is the life of the christian worker so important? _____

3. What qualifications are required of Christian workers in the following references?

(i) Philippians 2:15 _____

(ii) Titus 1:8 _____

(iii) I Timothy 3:3 _____

(iv) I Thessalonians 2:7 _____

(v) I Timothy 3:4 _____

(vi) I Thessalonians 5:6 _____

(vii) I Timothy 3:6 _____

(viii) I Corinthians 4:2 _____

(ix) II Timothy 2:3,4 _____

ACTIVITY: "This is a true saying, if a man desires the office of a bishop (worker), he desireth a good work" (I Timothy 3:1). Are you a worker in the church yet? Why don't you desire earnestly to be one?

STUDY 196

GODLINESS WITH CONTENTMENT

Text: I Timothy 6:1-12.

As the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is very near, perilous times truly abound. The hour of temptation has already come upon all the world to try the inhabitants of the earth. Like the people of the world, many christian workers are equally abusing the privilege of serving the Lord by falling into the temptations of anxiety, covetousness, envy, greediness and so on. People of perverse and corrupt minds, destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness, are now found around. The more the desires of their hearts are met the more they think that they are in God's will. At the same time, the more they have, the more they discover that their corrupt minds are unsatisfied. More possession, more comfort and yet contentment eludes them. The Lord strictly warns: "**...Take heed and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth**" (Luke 12:15). Hence he lovingly advised the rich young ruler to sell all he possessed and follow him. In Christ is the true contentment.

A christian comes to contentment not so much by way of more riches, honour or wealth. His/Her way is quite opposed to that of the world. He/She cannot be satisfied by anything on earth but God. He/She desires and prays to be filled with all the fulness of God. Whatever God may give a godly heart would run short of dissatisfaction except God Himself. He/She may be poor, perhaps he/she has scarcely a stool to sit on in his/her house as long as the presence of God and the blessing of God are there. That is a great treasure indeed. Paul in his letter to the Corinthian church wrote "**as poor, yet making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing all things**" (II Corinthians 6:10). There is more treasure in the poorest man's house if he is godly than in the house of the greatest man in the world with all his fine hangings, dainty meals, cosy beds and finely wrought furniture. The godly man's cry is "**Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon the earth that I desire beside thee**". "**Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father and it sufficeth us**" (John 14:8). To the godly man it is written "**Having food and raiment let us be therewith content**" (I Timothy 6:8). If you would get a contented life, do not grasp too much of the things of the world. If a man goes among thorns, when a better alternative is available, he has no reason to complain that he is pricked with them.

1. (a) Who is an ungodly person? _____

(b) How can an ungodly person become godly? _____

2. From the following references explain the condition of a discontent man.

(i) I Timothy 6:5. _____

(ii) Matthew 6:31, 32. _____

(iii) Mark 4:18, 19. _____

(iv) Psalm 52:7. _____

(v) Luke 12:15 _____

3. Explain the condition of the godly from the following references:

(i) 2 Corinthians 12:9 _____

(ii) Philippians 4:11 _____

(iii) 2 Corinthians 3:5 _____

(iv) 1 Timothy 6:6-8 _____

(v) Hebrews 13:5 _____

(vi) Psalm 62:1,5 _____

(vii) Nehemiah 6:3 _____

(viii) Psalm 42:1,2 _____

(ix) Ephesians 3:19 _____

(x) Philippians 4:18 _____

4. Is your greatest heart desire on more of the fulness of God or on more of the material things of the world? _____

STUDY 197

COME AND SEE

Text: John 1:34-42.

For many centuries, christians have been practising friendship evangelism, that is, winning into the Kingdom of God through friendly interactions during which, the exemplary life of the christian is so challenging to the sinner that the latter gives his/her life to Christ.

When John the Baptist told two of his disciples that Jesus was the Lamb of God, they went and asked Him where he lived. He told them "**come, and see**". Jesus Christ did not seek to convince them on the spot of His Messiahship. In His earthly Ministry of about three years, Christ demonstrated His Messiahship through His actions and the disciples came to believe in Him by observing how He lived day and night. Christ did not give believers a formula for winning souls but we learn to evangelise by watching the Master Evangelist Himself do it every day by the way He demonstrated His love for the people, cared for them, healed their sickness, rejoiced with them, cried with them and getting involved in their lives before teaching them. In the same way, we become interested in our unbelieving relations, neighbours and friends in order to prepare their hearts to receive the gospel message.

Our getting involved in their lives will make them to appreciate and accept us as loving people. It will also enable us to know them and their problems so that we can effectively help them. Showing interest in friends and neighbours and colleagues is having some common interest with them or helping them in some areas of need. For instance, we can assist them in areas of house-keeping, washing clothes, caring for a mother who has just been delivered of a baby, helping to buy house-hold effects from the market or counselling the wayward child of your neighbour. We need to open up our lives and invite all unsaved persons around us to 'come and see' Christianity as we live it eveiyday so that Christ will be real to them.

1. What is friendly evangelism? _____

2. In what practical ways can we demonstrate our interest in unbelieving people to challenge them to follow Christ? _____

3. What do we learn from Jesus Christ in the following situations?

- (i) John 2:1,2 _____
- (ii) John 11:32-38 _____
- (iii) John 4:7,9,14 _____

ACTIVITY

Think out one unsaved person with whom you will like to become friends. Ask yourself the following questions:

- (a) *How can I show a personal interest in this person?*
- (b) *How can I show the person that I care about him/ her?*
- (c) *What can I do for this person?*

Determine today, prayerfully and by practical demonstration of your interest in him/her, win him/ her to Christ.

STUDY 198 WHERE ART THOU?

Text: Genesis 3:1-10.

This great question from the Lord to Adam and Eve came soon after they yielded to the temptation of the devil and consequently lost the image of God. God was not ignorant of where they were for none can hide himself/herself from God. **"Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord"** (Jeremiah 23:24). God was asking them of their condition now having succumbed to the deceit of the devil.

The question is thought provoking for sinners and saints alike. The sinner should examine himself/herself and consider his/her latter end. Sin is pleasurable but deceitful and deadly. **"And the destruction of the transgressors and of sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed"** (Isaiah 1:28). The only way of escape from the Lord's judgment is repentance and as many as will turn to the Lord Jesus for pardon and forgiveness will receive mercy. If only the sinners will consider where they are, they will not rest until they return to God.

Believers need also to examine their present position in the Lord more so as the coming of the Lord draws nearer. Many like the Galatian church have been removed from the Lord unto another gospel. They started in the spirit but are now being made perfect in the flesh. They have thrown overboard the doctrine of

sanctification, restitution, monogamy and all other doctrines that stand in their way of fulfilling the desires of the flesh. To these people, the Lord is saying **"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee because thou hast left thy first love"** (Revelation 2:4). Is the love for holiness and evangelism still burning in our hearts or is the fire put off? Is your stand against all forms of sin - gossip, bribery, fornication, adultery, worldiness still the same? **"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?"** (I Corinthians 13:5). Let us possess our vessels in honour till the Lord comes.

The love of God in search of the lost Adam and Eve is a challenge and example to all believers. If God had not sought after them, to reclaim them, their conditions would have been as terrible as that of fallen angels. They would have wandered aimlessly if God, the Good Shepherd, had not searched them out. God's questions reminded Adam where he was, where he should be and why he could not be happy in the new state he was.

The sinners do not see the state they are in and they are blind to the danger ahead. Their minds have been blinded by the god of this world **"lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God should shine unto them"**. We owe it a duty to God and to every creature to preach the gospel to all men. We are to do it now before the time is up with them.

- 1. (a) In what state was Adam when God called him? _____
- (b) What decision did Adam take when he fell and what do we learn from this about Sinners? _____

- 2. What should be the attitude of believers daily as we expect the coming of the Lord?
 - (a) Psalm 139:23,24 _____
 - (b) Romans 6:12,13 _____
 - (c) I Thessalonians 5:22 _____
 - (d) I Peter 5:8,9 _____
 - (e) Mark 13:33 _____

- 3. What lessons do we learn in our text as soulwinners?

STUDY 199

CHASTISEMENT FROM THE LORD

Text: Hebrews 12:4-13

Chastisement is the art of instructing, training and disciplining of children in a fatherly way. It is the responsibility of a good father to train the children. Discipline, chastening or reproof, in whatever form, is an indispensable part of education. In the process of training the child, the use of rod cannot be undermined. Regrettably enough, modern educationists are found advocating the elimination of rod. What a permissive society that would be!

The manner in which chastening is carried out by some parents at home is sinful and slavish. A true christian home disciplines out of love and not to inflict injuries. Every son of the father is expected to pass through the rods **"For what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not!"**

God also chastises His children. He does it through suffering and trials. God does this out of love for He says **"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten..."** (Revelation 3:19). The divine purpose of God is to shapen our lives and on many occasions it is through suffering. Chastisement is common to all believers. In fact, the more trials, troubles and sufferings a believer passes through, the better and the stronger he/she becomes. The fire of chastening purifies our lives and deepens our consecration. The Lord Jesus Christ was made **"...perfect through suffering"** (Hebrews 2:10). God intends to build up His children in the most precious faith by bringing forth christlike believers. Also, God allows fires of tribulations to come into our lives in order to keep us humble. So, that **"thorn in the flesh"** is there despite all your prayers and sometimes fasting to get it removed.

Church discipline is another way of God chastening believers. The erring believer is disciplined in order to correct him or her. The Pastor, out of love, lays the rod of chastening on the believers in order to put their ways right with God. However, discipline is often grievous, painful and shameful, but the end result is **"Peaceable fruit of righteousness"** for those that endure the chastisement. Our attitude during discipline should be characterised by soberness, self-examination, repentance and prayer. Every little sin must be confessed and repented of. Also, fellow brothers should pray for disciplined believer and positive means should be pursued to encourage him/her through the period. Every effort should be made by all to **"lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed"** Hebrew 12:12,13.

1. (a) What is chastisement? _____

(b) Why is chastisement necessary?

2. From the following references, point out what chastened believer should do.

(i) 2 Chronicles 6:24-25 _____

(ii) Hebrews 12:7 _____

(iii) Hebrews 12:9 _____

(iv) Proverbs 3:11 _____

(v) Proverbs 15:10 _____

3. From the following references, write down the profit from discipline.

(i) I Peter 1:7 _____

(ii) John 15:2 _____

(iii) Hebrews 12:11 _____

4. Explain the attitude of God towards believers in the following passages:

(i) Psalm 89:31-34 _____

(ii) Psalm 118:18 _____

STUDY 200

PARENT-CHILDREN RELATIONSHIP

Text: Ephesians 6:1-4.

The home can be heaven on earth if every member of the family will keep to their responsibilities and duties as laid down in the scriptures. Parents have the

responsibility 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). God's commandment to the child is **"My son, hear the instructions of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother"** (Proverbs 1:8).

Children are commanded to obey their parents as long as such demands are not in conflict with the scriptures. It is not good for a child to despise his/her parents or ridicule them before their peers and other people. Our parents have the responsibility to choose our friends, schools, work, career, etc. for us. We are to be guided by their wisdom and experience. Whatever fears, problems and difficulties we have should be discussed. Attempts to shield them away may cause untold hardship and great damage to our career or life. Every child should learn to take up domestic responsibilities at home. They are part of our training for the future. Respect, honour and regard should at all times be shown to our parents.

Every child needs the counsel, comfort, care and love of the parents. These are legitimate rights of the child. Children should feel secured and acceptable in the home. His mistakes should be corrected in love without bitterness. Forcing a child to accept our goals and ideas, abusing him physically or psychologically, expecting too much from him or failing to understand him or failing to admit our own mistakes can cause resentment from the child.

Discipline is part of training of a child. **"Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea he shall give delight to thy soul... but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame"** (Proverbs 29:17,15). Discipline must be done in love and not in anger. The aim must be to make the child realise what he has done, the evil effects of his action and why he has to be disciplined for it.

Withdrawal of privileges for a certain periods, rebuke and beating with rod are various methods that should be applied to correct a child. The discipline must not however be out of proportion to the offence committed.

Parents are also to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This is to be done by example and direct instruction. If our relationships with our own children are good, if they feel secured and comfortable, if they see love in us, they naturally will want to be like us. If we are loud, boisterous and yell a lot, they take after us. If we are sensitive, honest, understanding and prayerful they learn to cultivate the same qualities. When in times of problems and difficulties at home our children see us taking everything to the Lord in prayer without any anxiety or agitations, they will also learn to have confidence in God and take their problems to the Lord.

1. What are the responsibilities of a child towards his parents?

(a) _____

(b) _____

- (c) _____
- (d) _____
2. Enumerate the various responsibilities of parents towards their children.
- (a) _____
- (b) _____
- (c) _____
- (d) _____
- (e) _____
3. What lessons do we learn from the following passages?
- (a) I Kings 1:5,6 _____
- (b) I Samuel 3:13 _____
- (c) Genesis 18:19 _____
- (d) 2 Timothy 1:5 _____
- (e) Luke 2:51 _____

STUDY 201

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT

Text: I Timothy 6:11-16

There are many battles that people fight in life. Both sinners and saints are engaged in the battle. A sinner struggles to overcome sin while a christian fights against the devil, the world and the flesh which hinder his full appropriation of the merits of calvary. When a christian worker suddenly becomes cold, it is the work of the adversary, the devil. This was rightly observed by Judah in Nehemiah 4:10,11. **"And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall, and our adversary said they shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease"**. Is this not the case with some fervent christian workers whose strength had become decayed as a result of sins? The devil has taken the upper hand. Regrettably, the mighty are

truly fallen. Others are wounded by the fiery darts directed by the devil. Such also are half dead and half alive.

Take a look at your personal life. Compare your present spiritual life with the past, who has won the battle? You or the devil? Where is the fervency? Where is the fire, where is the holiness, where is the boldness with which you once defended the truth? Where is your faith? What about time spent on studying the Bible and meditating on the perfect law of liberty and your prayer life? **"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen..."** (Revelation 2:5).

The things of the flesh now appeal to you while spiritual things are fading away. You can now afford to miss any of the weekly meetings and can explain it away with impunity. Don't you see that you have started to build again those things you had earlier pulled down? The dog has gone back to the vomit. Dresses are now becoming worldly fashioned. Your liberty so to say is now being used for an occasion to the flesh. Just a little diversion from the standard is a clear reflection of the state of the heart. What about unbelief? The more the promise of children to Abraham was delayed, the more his faith in the Lord waxed strong. Where is your faith? Your strength is small. To others it is fear and anxiety, others give room for discouragement as a result of delay in answers to prayers.

The battle starts from the time a christian is born again and it rages on until he is called home. But if you will put on the whole armour of God and look up to the Lord, you will surely win in the battles of life. There is need to keep close to the Author and finisher of our faith and resist the devil and every negative thought. No matter how fierce the battle may be raging, with God's promises in the heart, forgetting the evils, failures and disappointments of the past and renewing one's consecration by steadfastly looking unto the Lord, the believer will be more than conquerors, and the lost grounds would be reclaimed. The Lord has promised to take us to heaven. That is our eternal home. Christians, seek not yet repose. Cast thy dreams of ease away. Thou art in the midst of foes. Watch and pray!

1. (a) Explain briefly how sinners fight the following:

(i) Fellow human beings _____

(ii) Afflictions and torments _____

(iii) The devil _____

(iv) Sin _____

Are they victorious _____ Yes _____ No? _____

Why (II Corinthians 10:3-4) _____

2. (a) What are the believers' weapons for the battle? _____

(b) Read Ephesians 6:13-17 and mention the whole armour of God.

3. Explain how a sinner can be born again and have Jesus as his Captain to lead the battle. _____

STUDY 202

BELIEVE AND SHARE

Text: Acts 2:14-38

On the day of Pentecost, Simon Peter and the one hundred and twenty disciples of Christ who had been with Him in the upper room after the Ascension shared their faith with the multitudes that were gathered in Jerusalem. They spoke of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. In proclaiming Christ, Peter spoke of Christ's wonderful life, His betrayal and crucifixion, His resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of God, and His position now as Lord. The disciples spoke with deep conviction of the truth about Christ that their hearers were "**pricked in their heart**" and they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles "**men and brethren, what shall we do?**" Peter replied "**Repent, and be baptised every one of you**

in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost!"

God is still using believers today as the principal instruments in declaring Christ, for countless millions have not yet heard the Gospel. Our witness must be based on the truth that Jesus Christ was born of virgin Mary; lived a sinless life; that He is God; that He died an atoning death is proof of our obedience to Christ (Mark 16:15). It is the manifestation of our gratitude for His love that He shed for us. It is also an indication of the spiritual force within us, **"for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh"** (Matthew 12:34). It is evident that we are answerable to Christ for what we have done with our lives including what we have done to spread the good news about Him, **"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad"** (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Believers are called to pass on the light to those who are still in darkness (I Corinthians 15:34). Sharing our belief, therefore, is a recognition of our sense of responsibility to the lost and an appreciation of the sense of urgency that Christ attached to the task of sharing our faith. Christ declared **"I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day, the night cometh when no man can work"** (John 9:4). When we share our belief, it shows our genuine concern for the spiritual needs of others (I Thessalonians 2:8) and our desire to share what the Lord has given to us.

1. On what scriptural principles must the faith of the believer be based?

2. (a) Mention some Bible characters that shared their beliefs with others.

(b) What were the results of such sharing?

Acts 3:12-26; 4:4 _____

Acts 7:54-60 _____

Acts 8:4 _____

Acts 26:11-28 _____

3. Why must believers share their beliefs? (i) _____
(ii) _____ (iii) _____
(vi) _____ (v) _____

STUDY 203

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Text: John 10:14, 18, 27-30

The Shepherd has a very difficult responsibility of watching over the flock in the heat of the day, in the frost of the night and most of the time, he has to keep awake and be watchful in order that the sheep will not wander away and get lost. He gently leads the flock to where there is green pasture and cares for the young and the disabled amongst them. At the risk of his own life, he defends the sheep against thieves, robbers and wild animals. When he carries out his duties with diligence, faithfulness, boldness, courage, selflessness and patience, he is said to be a good shepherd.

God's people are referred to as sheep and Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd. He declared "**I am the Good Sheperd: the good shepherd give his life for the sheep.**" He came with love, mercy and compassion seeking the sinner and the backslider by preaching the gospel of the Kingdom. He diligently, patiently and daily taught so that the saved might remain in the faith. He sharply rebuked the Scribes and the Pharisees, false teachers, who kept the people, bound under false religions, in slavish fear of God and turned their eyes away from Christ their Redeemer. He finally laid down His life to secure the eternal salvation of mankind. He said "**Greater love hath no man than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friends.**" "**That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life**" (John 15:13; 3:16).

Even though Christ is physically removed from us today, He is our unfailing Helper in time of trial, temptation and battle of life. Today, we can still hear Him by faith saying to us "fear not; I am with you". "**I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore**" (Revelation 1:18). He knows our temptations and He is concerned with our tears.

As believers and workers in the church, we must follow the footsteps of the Shepherd, Jesus Christ, by faithfully and zealously publishing the 'good news'; patiently teaching the new converts "**all things whatsoever I have commanded**

you"; perseveringly praying and counselling them; selflessly caring for them and vigilantly protecting them against false shepherds.

i. _____

(a) What were the duties of the shepherds in ancient Israel? _____

(b) Why was their job dangerous? _____

2. Why is Jesus Christ referred to as the Good Shepherd in the following references?

(i) Matthew 9:36 _____

(ii) John 10:10 _____

(iii) John 15:13 _____

(v) Psalm 23:1-6 _____

(vi) Acts 10:38 _____

(vii) Isaiah 53:4,5 _____

3. Mention the activities of false shepherds in Ezekiel 34:4 _____

(c) From Ezekiel 34:16,23,28 explain the responsibilities of believers as 'shepherds' _____

STUDY 204

THE COMING OF THE LORD

Text: I Thessalonians 4:13-18.

The first coming of the Lord Jesus was predicted by God the Father right from the book of Genesis. Many prophets also predicted his coming and, on arrival in the manger, angels heralded his birth. Similarly, the second coming of Christ forms an integral truth of the scriptures. Jesus emphasised it on many occasions. He talked of it in parables and in plain languages. Angels confirmed his second coming to comfort the distressed disciples as they gaze at their Master being received into heaven.

For sometime now, Christ has gone to heaven to go and prepare a place for believers, both dead and alive. He will come back again to take them to Himself for He had prayed "**Father I will that they also, whom thou has given me be with me where I am that they may behold my glory...**" (John 17:24).

The question is: Who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appeareth? Blessed is that man who the Lord when He comes remains holy and abides in the work of the Lord. He will not be ashamed at Christ's coming. There is need to be watchful and remain in the faith. The date of His coming is unknown. Therefore, no man can tell exactly when He will come. This puts every believer on the alert, always ready. Involvements in worldly amusements and assemblies should be checked for "**no man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier**" (2 Timothy 2:4).

Suppose Jesus came and met you with gossiping, backbiting, murmuring, fighting, complaints and unforgiving spirit, would you go with Him? Of course, No. Beloved let us live from day to day in duty and devotion, keeping our garments spotless and our hands clean in preparation for the trumpet call. Our positions in the church as choir, ushers and in any other area of work are not the passport for rapture. If there are restitutions to be made, we should quickly obey without further delay for "**In such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh**".

3. (a) Give three witnesses that predicted the first coming of the Lord.

- (i) _____
- (ii) _____
- (iii) _____

(b) Give three witnesses that also predicted the second coming of the Lord.

- (i) _____
- (ii) _____
- (iii) _____

4. From the following references what are the purposes of Christ's second coming?

- (i) John 14:3 _____
- (ii) Corinthians 15:25,26 _____
- (iii) Matthew 24:31 _____
- (iv) Matthew 25:31-34,41 _____
- (v) Philippians 3:20,21 _____
- (vi) Matthew 16:27 _____

3. What should be believers' attitude to Christ's second coming?

- (c I Corinthians 1:7 _____
- (ci Titus 2:3 _____
- (cii Matthew 24:42 _____
- (ciii Matthew 24:44 _____
- (civ Luke 19:13 _____
- (cv I John 3:1,2 _____

STUDY 205

SUFFERING FOR CHRIST'S SAKE

Text: Matthew 5:1-12

Our text shows the picture of a true believer. A born-again christian is characterised by these christian virtues: righteousness, humility, peacemaking,

tenderness, kindness and love. These, the believer learns from Christ his Saviour. Jesus is without sin. He is perfect and blameless. He is good, He healed the sick, raised the dead and fed the hungry multitudes.

But Christ was hated without any cause. He was rejected, crucified and put to death. Unbelievers also hate every follower of Christ. This happens not necessarily because of what the believer does but because of who he is a Christian. Christ dwells in him. The persecution may come in various forms like being reviled, defamed, denied of legitimate rights, betrayal, loss of friends, physical assault, being ridiculed before elders in the family, village or community.

Passing through these experiences should not be a strange thing to believers. Neither should believers pray not to experience persecution because every true believer is called to suffer for Christ's sake. **"For I will show him (Paul) how great things he must suffer for my name's sake"** (Acts 9:16). **"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution:"** (2 Timothy 3:12). It is God who has put the enmity between the Seed of the woman and the Devil and that is the reason why the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing **"... saying let us break their bands ass under and cast away their cords from us."** We discover then that persecution is inevitable.

Persecution is the handwork of the Devil. By so persecuting the believer, the devil hopes to discourage him from completely surrendering to Christ or give up the faith and hence, frustrate the purpose of the Lord for him. The devil also hopes to make use of persecution to hinder those who want to declare for Christ. When someone who is weak-minded meditates on the cost of suffering for Christ, he might shrink from taking the steps towards repentance.

God's purpose for allowing suffering and persecution include perfecting the believer, testing the quality of Christian faith and enhancing the spread of the good news.

Our attitude during suffering and persecution is very noteworthy. Christ admonished us to rejoice and be exceeding glad for **"Hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously"** (I Peter 2:21,23).

Are you persecuted, ill-treated, slighted? **"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you"** (I Peter 5:10).

1. Why do the unbelievers persecute Christians? _____

2. Why does God allow persecution?

(i) Matthew 10:23; Acts 8:4. _____

(ii) I Peter 1:6,7. _____

(b) Matthew 10:22 _____

(c) Matthew 5:18 _____

3. From the following references mention the kinds of persecution believers pass through,

(i) 2 Corinthians 6:8 _____

(ii) Hebrews 11:36 _____

(iii) Matthew 10:22 _____

(iv) Matthew 24:9 _____

(v) Acts 9:1 _____

(vi) Acts 4:17,18 _____

(vii) John 6:42,43 _____

(viii) Acts 14:1,2 _____

(ix) Acts 5:18 _____

(x) Acts 13:50,51 _____

4. What should be our attitude to persecution and suffering?

(i) Matthew 10:23 _____

(ii) Romans 12:14 _____

STUDY 206 WON BY LOVE

Text: Luke 19:1-10.

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God", but the sacrifice of Jesus Christ at Calvary is God's redemption plan for mankind. Nevertheless, there are people who in fear of their terrible sinful life do

not think that this sacrifice can atone for them. What a great assurance of His love is God extending to such sinners. **"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord! though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool"** (Isaiah 1:18).

Jesus Christ, by His love, sought for and won Zacchaeus, the chief of the publicans, a lost sinner giving us an example of how we can bring hope to the hopeless. **"Make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house"** (Luke 19:5). This is expression of friendship by Christ with someone who was disdained by the society. There are in our society today prisoners and ex-convicts; drug addicts and in-mates of orphanages; hospital patients who are losing the battle for their survival and yet, have no Christ in their lives; people who troubled in their conscience and worried about their end because of their wicked lives but do not know that the way of escape from the lake of fire is through Christ Jesus. Our love for such people demonstrated by our friendship, caring, prayer and earnest sharing of the word of God with them is able to win them unto Christ.

- 1. What is the desire of God for all sinners?
I Timothy 2:4. _____

- 2. Mention some categories of hardened sinners in our society _____

- 3. How can we apply the lessons in these references to the winning of hardened sinners?
 - (i) Luke 15:22-24 _____
 - (ii) Luke 19:5 _____
 - (iii) John 4:7 _____
 - (iv) Matthew 18:12,13 _____
 - (v) Matthew 9:36 _____
 - (vi) Luke 7:13 _____
 - (vii) Luke 23:34 _____
 - (viii) John 13:12-15 _____

STUDY 207

LIFE OF OBEDIENCE AND PURITY

Text: Philippians 2:1-8; 1 Peter 2:21-25.

Purity of life and obedience to God in all things are essential in our daily walk with the Lord. God's demand for purity is based on His nature, and His command to obedience is for our good. **"And now... what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord, thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul to keep the commandments of the Lord, and His statutes ... for thy good!"** Deuteronomy 10:12,13.

Purity of life is not more nor less than perfect love for God and man in a clean heart. If we love God with all our heart, we will diligently seek after His will and gladly keep all His commandments, no matter how inconvenient it is to the flesh. Holiness of life makes obedience to God's command a delight. The pure in heart loves his fellow men as himself and will not do any wrong to them.

The mightiest men of God of all ages were holy men, with a clean heart and submissive spirit. They were filled with love to God and men and were not disobedient to the heavenly vision. Without purity, Joseph and Daniel would not have been able to resist temptations of the king's courts; Stephen and Paul would have chosen to deny the Lord rather than face death. They all chose to obey God at the expense of their lives because **"...they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city"**. The heavenly city is for those who live holy and obey the Lord to the end.

As long as there are roots of sin in the heart, rebellion to God's command inclusive, the Holy spirit cannot have His ways in us and our usefulness to God will be hindered. When our hearts are clean and there is determination to do His will at all costs, we will have power for service and do exploit for the Lord.

If the pure in heart is to remain in the will of God, his obedience to God's commands must be prompt and exact. God's commands must be his frontlet. He must boldly stand for the truth and courageously declare it. There should be no grudging in his obedience; it must always be with joy. He does not have to look upon his strength and ability to do all He commands. His strength and ability will fail him but God's grace and strength is more than sufficient for him.

(1) Why is a life of purity and obedience essential?

- (a) _____
- (b) _____

(c) _____

(d) _____

(e) _____

(2) How should the pure in heart react to God's command?

(a) John 2:5 _____

(b) Psalm 40:8 _____

(c) John 4:34 _____

(d) Psalm 119:60 _____

(3) What are the rewards of holy living and obedience?

(a) James 1:25 _____

(b) Revelation 22:14 _____

(c) Hebrews 12:14 _____

STUDY 208

THE SOUL WINNERS JOY

Text: Luke 15:1-10

The murmuring of the Pharisees against Christ for His love for sinners gave cause for the two parables in our passage. The two parables reveal the soulwinners joy and various ways of winning souls. In the first, the Shepherd leaves ninety and nine sheep and searches for the one lost sheep, in the second, the woman stays right at home and by cleaning the house finds the lost coin.

Like the Shepherd, soulwinners are to go out knocking on doors seeking the lost sheep and inviting people into the house of God. We need to search for souls wherever they are as a shepherd will comb the fields in search of a strayed sheep. There will never be a rescuing of the lost until there is a concern and compassion. We are not to wait until they find their ways; they may never find their way to Christ. We must search for sinners like we search for a child that has missed his way. Remember that all we like sheep have gone astray and someone searched through the night that we might be rescued.

The most pathetic and terrible thing is for men to sit in the house of God and still be lost. And there are people in our church and house fellowships that warm

the seat, swell up the numbers but are yet to be saved. They are lost in the house of the Lord! We that are saved have the responsibility to clean the house and seek diligently after them till they are found. This is not by lowering the standard of holiness but by presenting the old time gospel message backed with prayers and tears!

The result of our efforts is stated in verses 7 and 10. Not only is there rejoicing on earth when a sinner finds Christ but also there is rejoicing in heaven. Soulwinning makes heaven happy. The sinner finds joy, the soulwinner finds joy and heaven is agog with joy. If we want more joy we must win more souls.

The greatest service we can render for the Lord is to reconcile the sinners to Him and the best thing we can do for this sinful world is to proclaim the gospel message and let the light of the Gospel shine in our lives.

If we keep quiet or give up, they will perish. If we do not see the fruits immediately, we should not be discouraged. If we witness for God and sow the seed, the harvest will surely come, then we shall be filled with joy for what we do now. **"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psalm 126:6).**

1. Find out the responsibility of every soulwinner in our text.
verse 4 _____
verse 8 _____
2. What are the two places mentioned in our text where we could find sinners?
i) _____
ii) _____
3. What must every soulwinner possess to be effective in soulwinning?
(a) Isaiah 52:11 _____
(b) John 20:21 _____
(c) John 9:4 _____
(d) Matthew 9:36 _____
4. List out the results of soulwinning:
(a) Luke 15:6,8 _____
(b) Luke 15:7,10 _____
(c) Daniel 12:3 _____