

20th Century Bible Course

LESSON THIRTY

Dear Friend:

During the course of these 30 lessons, I hope you have learned to love and appreciate the truths found in God's Word. Now perhaps the question is tugging at your mind, Where do I go from here?

Surely you would not want to turn back. How could you go back to darkness now that you know the light? How could you go back to guilt now that you have experienced forgiveness? How could you go back to the fear of death now that you have the promise of life? How could you go back to shifting sand now that you have stood on solid rock? How could you go back to uncertainty now that you *know*? How could you go back to the hands of men now that you have felt the hand of God?

Peter was the one who said, "Master, to whom shall we go? You alone have the words that give eternal life" (John 6:68, LB). The road that Jesus called narrow-like an elevator-goes only two ways-up or down, and you wouldn't want to press the down button, would you? Wouldn't it be tragic when the lifeboat comes in sight, and then within your reach, to applaud it, and cheer it, and praise its sturdy construction, and not get in? Wouldn't it seem a little strange to talk about what a good lifeboat it is while it moves away without you?

It's like that with truth. Truth received only as information can never save. It isn't enough to enjoy reading the Bible and listening to sermons, or even to believe the truth. It takes courage to say, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Or "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:15). Or "If I perish, I perish" (Esther 4:16). But that is the stuff of which heroes, and saints, and Martin Luthers, are made. No, it is not enough to applaud the lifeboat. Truth must be acted upon.

Through your study of the Bible you have been informed. You have learned. You have been inspired. But did it ever occur to you that truth isn't entertainment-that God wants you to do something about it?

Who? Me? Yes-you! These lessons were written for you, not somebody else-and so was the Bible! I repeat, *truth was meant to be acted upon!* That's why Jesus talked about it so much. There are people who have a collection of Bible-course diplomas framed on their wall, but it has never occurred to them that God expects them to do anything about what they have learned. Jesus said, "So why do you call Me 'Lord' when you won't obey Me?" And He added, "Those who listen and don't obey are like a man who builds a house without a foundation. When the floods sweep down against that house, it crumbles into a heap of ruins" (Luke 6:46-49, Living Bible).

So now you come to the question:

What will you do with Jesus?

What will you do with truth?

You cannot separate the two, for Jesus said, "I am the truth."

It is my prayer that as you study this lesson the Holy Spirit will guide you to make Jesus-to make truth-your choice.

Your Bible Instructor

LESSON 30: GROWING UP IN CHRIST

SCRIPTURE READING: MATTHEW 13:3-9; 18-23; MATTHEW 7:17-29

Someone has said, "Maturity does not come like a Christmas gift, neatly tied and wrapped and tagged, and delivered to your door. There are two stages we must all pass through in achieving maturity-first, we must be born; and second, we must grow up!"

Part 1-- GROWING UP - The Devotional Life

1. In what two ways are we to grow? 2 Peter 3:18 _____

2. What is God's purpose for us? Colossians 1:28 _____

3. Why is it important to continually grow in knowing God? John 17:3 _____

Just as physical life is dependent upon eating, breathing and exercising, so spiritual life and growth require spiritual breath, food and exercise, all of which involve knowing the Saviour better. If you want to develop a friendship with someone you have met, you arrange to spend time with him. The more you are together the better you will get to know him. How can we know God better? By talking to Him (prayer), listening to Him (through His Word), and doing things with Him (witnessing)-in short, spending time with Him.

4. What is the Christian's spiritual food? John 6:48-63

"I am that _____." Verse 63 explains what Jesus meant:

"The _____ that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are _____."

5. Upon what does spiritual growth (sanctification) depend? John 17:17

_____. What is truth? _____

To keep physically alive we eat three meals a day. To keep spiritually alive we need the Bread of Life as regular nourishment. Most people spend nearly an hour a day eating. Can we expect to grow spiritually with less effort? A thoughtful hour a day spent studying God's Word, especially the life of Christ, will bring rewarding spiritual growth.

6. What example did Jesus give in His prayer life? (For more on prayer see Lesson 17.)

Matthew 14:23; Mark 1:35 _____

Luke 6:12 _____

Prayer, the breath of the soul, is closely related to our devotional time with the Lord, for it is talking to Him. While this communication can, and should, continue throughout the day, it does not negate the need for a special appointment with Jesus every day.

7. How does the Christian do things with Jesus? Matthew 28:19, 20 "Go ye therefore, and _____ all nations,... and, lo, _____, even unto the end of the world."

The Holy Spirit represents Christ on earth (John 16:13, 14). Through Him Jesus is with us every moment as we witness to others in His behalf. Note that His parting words were, "Lo, I am with you always."

Part 2-- GROWING UP - The Life of Faith

1. How are we to continue walking with the Lord? Colossians 2:6 _____

2. How did we receive Christ? John 3:16 _____

What a beautiful and simple guideline for Christian living! By an act of the will we accepted Jesus as our Saviour. By an act of the will we are to maintain a trusting relationship with Him-to believe whatever He says, accept whatever He offers, and do whatever He wishes. Faith is a total commitment of all that we are and have to the Lord.

3. What does Paul admonish us to do? 1 Timothy 6:12 _____

4. How do we fight the fight of faith? John 6:29 _____

This kind of belief is more than an exercise in "positive thinking," or merely "taking God at His word." For example, Jesus journeyed to Tyre and Sidon (Matthew 15), and as He passed through one place, a Canaanite woman came to Him and begged, "Have mercy on me, Lord. My daughter is grievously vexed of the devil. Please heal her."

Jesus ignored her completely! He didn't even reply! No one likes to be ignored. "Tell her to go away," the disciples suggested, "she's a nuisance!" Jesus seemed to agree, for He turned to her and said, "I am only sent to help the lost sheep of the house of Israel." In other words, Jesus said, "Look, lady, I didn't come here to help *you*!"

But this woman kept right on worshipping Him and saying, "Lord, help me!"

Again Jesus verbally pushed her away. "It is not proper to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs."

Have you ever been called a dog? Most of us would have slunk away at that rebuff, but not this lady. "That's true, Lord," she replied, "yet the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table. Give me just a crumb-one little crumb!"

Then came Jesus' answer, showing what *real faith* is all about: "O woman, great is your faith. Be it unto you even as you wilt." And her daughter was healed. If you are going to define faith in terms of belief alone, this story doesn't fit! She did not take Christ at His word! She *trusted* Him. She trusted Him with her life, her daughter, and her needs, and that is what real faith is. *Pistis* (Greek for "faith") can also be translated "belief" or "trust." Real faith is placing our trust in God.

The apostle Paul was a champion of faith! But if faith is only making yourself believe that something will happen if you believe strong enough, then Paul flunked the course. There were plenty of promises he could have claimed that should have delivered him from the dungeon and the beheader's block.

If faith is making yourself believe that something isn't going to happen because God promised protection, then Huss and Jerome failed the test. They could have claimed the promise that when you walk through the fire, "thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Isaiah 43:2), and not been burned at the stake.

Did Paul and these men die because their faith wasn't strong enough? No, they died because they had *genuine* faith-faith that trusted God in trouble, in tribulation, in pain, and even in death. This kind of faith can come only as a result of knowing God on a one-to-one basis, person-to-person. Whenever you come to the word "faith" or "belief" in the Bible, try substituting "trust," and you will get closer to its true meaning.

John 14:1 . . . Ye *trust* God, then *trust* also in me.

Acts 16:31 . . . *Trust* in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.

This is *not* the same as merely saying "I believe." In our world today there is a cheap faith which demands only that you "believe in Christ" in order to be saved. No! Learning to trust God demands a personal, continued *relationship* with a trustworthy God!

What then, is our part in fighting the fight of faith? Our work is to trust (John 6:29). And that involves getting to know the One who is trustworthy, because we naturally distrust someone until we know he is trustworthy.

One more word: If you learn to know a person who is completely trustworthy, you don't have to try to generate trust. Trust comes in the same way that you fall in love. You don't fall in love by trying to fall in love! Love comes naturally when one becomes acquainted with someone he can love.

5. How does faith (trust) come? Romans 10:17 _____

It is through the Word that we get to know our Lord. So what is the good fight of

faith? Nothing more than taking the measure of faith that God has already given us (Romans 12:3) and using it toward becoming better acquainted with Him each day, so that we can trust Him because we know Him. Never fight for faith; fight to learn to know God. It requires a real effort to maintain a daily friendship with God. Why? Because the devil knows there is power for victory in knowing God (1 John 5:4), so he will do anything he can to keep us from spending time with Him. (This section adapted from Morris Venden's *Good Fight of Faith*, pp. 8-16.)

Part 3-- GROWING UP - MEETING TEMPTATIONS AND TRIALS

1. How did Jesus learn obedience? Hebrews 5:8 _____

2. What suffering taught Jesus obedience? Hebrews 2:18 _____

3. How did Jesus meet temptation? Matthew 4:4,7,10 _____

4. What promises of help and victory in temptation and trials have been given us?

2 Peter 2:9 _____

Psalm 145:14 _____

1 Corinthians 10:13 _____

2 Corinthians 12:9 _____

Jude 24 _____

Philippians 1:6 _____

5. Why does God permit us to suffer trying experiences (temptations and trials)?

Acts 14:22 _____

Isaiah 48:10 _____

6. What should be our attitude when we fail? Micah 7:8 _____

The Christian life may be illustrated by a parable: You start out on the Christian free-way thinking you are a pretty good driver. But you keep meeting a big Mack truck driven by an evil-looking creature. And every time you meet that diesel, it crowds you off into the ditch. You just can't seem to cope with the situation. So you go to a Man in a white robe with scars in His hands, and say, "Look! I've made a mess of my driving. Please, will You take the wheel!" And when you pray like that, a miracle begins. As long as you let Jesus drive, you'll have no trouble with the devil and his trucks--otherwise known as temptations. It's when you become self-confident again and ask Him to move over and let you take the wheel--which, of course, He will--that trouble comes again.

7. What armor is the Christian given? Ephesians 6:13-18 _____

8. When we put on this armor, what are we really doing? Romans 13:14 _____

9. How can we make Satan flee? James 4:7 _____

We resist him by placing our full and complete trust in Jesus "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5), Jesus said. We can't save ourselves, but Jesus can't save us either unless we let Him. A little girl was asked what she did when Satan tempted her to do wrong. "Well," she replied, "when Satan comes knocking, I just turn to Jesus and ask Him to answer the door, and when Satan sees Jesus at the door, he says, 'Oh, oh, I guess I have the wrong house.'" Resisting is an act of the will. The choosing is ours.

Part 4-- GROWING UP - THE LIFE OF OBEDIENCE

What we have been studying may be summed up in one word-action. Studying God's Word is action; prayer is action; witnessing and doing things with Christ is action; resisting the devil is action; obedience is action. Even faith-trusting fully in Jesus-is action, for in its truest sense, genuine trust, while it may sometimes be passive, is usually active-it works!

1. What does true faith do? Galations 5:6 _____

James 2:18 Genuine faith is revealed by _____

2. After learning what God's will is through His Word, how are we to respond?

James 1:22 _____

Luke 11:28 _____

Romans 2:13 _____

Millions pretend to be Christians, having a "form of godliness" that denies "the power thereof" (2 Timothy 3:5). Again and again the Scriptures emphasize that salvation is for the obedient and not for those who merely bear a label marked "Christian."

3. To whom is Christ the author of salvation? Hebrews 5:9 _____

4. How serious is it to fail to obey truth? 2Thessalonians 1:8,9 _____

Matthew 7:21-23 _____

5. How did Abraham reveal His trust in God? Genesis 22:8-13 _____

(verse 8) "God will _____

(verses 9,10) What did Abraham *do*? _____

(verse 13) How did God honor his obedience? _____

6. How did Naaman show faith? 2 Kings 5:1 0-14 _____

(verse 14) How was his obedience honored? _____

7. How did the three Hebrews show their faith in God? Daniel 3:17-27 _____

When these three young men who had acted out their trust were cast into that fiery furnace, God didn't first put out the fire--their act of faith came first, and then the miracle.

8. How did the Israelites show faith as they approached the Jordan and God told them to cross? Joshua 3:15 _____

(verses 16,17) **What did God do for them?** _____

God could have rolled back the river before their eyes. He could have taken all the adventure out of faith. Instead, He let the Jordan roll on, and did not work His miracle until the feet of the priests had touched the water. Then He rolled it back as against a dam, and the people crossed on dry land.

Are you ready to step into the water at God's command, knowing that there isn't any risk at all in obedience, but only in delay? There is no risk in placing all your trust and confidence in Jesus. With your hand in His you are safe *anywhere*.

You have not come to this hour by accident. It is by divine appointment that truth has found its way into your life. What will you do with it? In the quiet of this moment, with the world shut out, seeing nothing but the cross of Calvary and the Saviour who says, "If you love Me, keep My commandments," what will your decision be?

[] I want to follow Jesus and be a part of the church that keeps the commandments of God and has the testimony of Jesus.

[] I have questions, but I want to continue to study.

[] Please pray that I will not disappoint my Lord.