

January 6, 2019

Focus: KNOWING GOD AND DOING EXPLOITS
Topic: KNOWING GOD AND DOING EXPLOITS
Text: Daniel 11:32, Joshua 1:8, John 17:3, 14:12, Hosea 4:6

Introduction

As the year 2019 opens, it is good to be reminded about the goal of God for his children. Even though exploits in common conversation depicts engaging in things heroic, adventurous, daring and amazing, they are not to be scarce and far between within the Christian community. The feats regarded as exploits constitute the regular desire and expectation of God. For God's children, it is natural to do exploits. Their Father will not settle for less and they should also make it their aspiration. A child of God whose life falls short of doing exploits therefore needs to reflect, repent and yield to the source of the power for doing exploits to draw necessary strength. If the word of God is believed and followed, then the Christian has begun the journey of righteous, holy, and godly living, which is equivalent to following Jesus on the narrow way. God is pleased but the ordinary person says it is not possible.

The condition for doing exploits is the knowledge of God. That also explains what kind of exploits that God is calling His children to do. It is not the exploits that could be accomplished in the flesh but only through the revelational knowledge of God. The prayer focus of Jesus in John 17:3 was ... ***that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.*** In this is eternal life and the power to do exploits as revealed by Daniel 11:32b ... ***but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.*** What accounts for weakness instead of strength is a lack of knowledge and the word of God affirms that for this, God's people perish (Hosea 4:6). Whereas it is common to desire exploits and hate to be weak or perish, there is a need to check the causes and earnestly seek to increase in knowledge. A believer must make the knowledge of God the basis of their choices and actions. Peter's choice to follow Jesus after being told he would become a fisher of men was the beginning of exploits for him; ditto for other disciples and Christians today. The progressive manifestation of Christ in them based on their knowledge is a confirmation of the scripture.

Lesson Aim: To choose to live by the knowledge of God

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss the impediments a Christian may have to living in power and victory (Dan 11:32a, 2Thes. 2:10-12, 1 John 2:4)
2. Examine how David's instruction to Solomon in 1Chronicles 28:9-13 links knowing God to doing exploits and the lessons for believers from this.
3. Discuss what is responsible for exploits observed among believers (Zech. 10:3-6, Haggai 2:4)

Memory Scripture:

And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits. (Daniel 11:32)

January 13, 2019

Focus: KNOWING GOD AND DOING EXPLOITS
Topic: CHRIST, THE IMAGE OF GOD
Text: Colossians 1:9-19, 2 Corinthians 4:3-7, Hebrews 1:1-4

Introduction

In the beginning, man was made in the image of God. This man, however, died as a result of disobedience and a new image took over. Thanks be to God who has once again raised the Son of Man. The first man was created in the image of God while Christ is the express image of God. God has decided to reveal himself to the world through Christ. Since human beings are not able to know God by seeking for him, God took the nature of man in Christ, his express image to search for and redeem lost mankind. Jesus, our Emmanuel, responded to Philip's request to be shown the Father by declaring thus: ... *he that hath seen me hath seen the Father* (John 14:9). In simple terms, knowing Christ is the only way to knowing God. This study therefore focuses on the reflection of the image of God through Christ. As Christ reveals the image of God to the world, so Christians should also do. This is possible only for those that are following Jesus. Also, knowing God is to promote a good relationship with Him with the view to pleasing Him by agreeing with and allowing Him to will and do as He desires with us. A life of surrender will not be possible except we are familiar and intimate with the image of God.

It is important to understand the dispensations of God as expressed in Hebrews 1:1-2. A lack of understanding of the dispensation of God often leads many into error as they read the Bible without knowing how to rightly divide the Word of God. The Scripture makes it clear that God spoke in certain manner in the past but that He has now spoken by His Son Jesus Christ. Whatever was written or done previously in the scriptures that are not in agreement with Christ cannot be followed today. Christ is God's message, medium, life, beginning and ending. He is the express image of God; to know Him is to know God. No man today can attain the knowledge of God without the knowledge of Christ. That was why Paul prayed for every church to be filled with the knowledge of Christ. This must be the prayer of every church and believer today.

Lesson Aim: To know Christ

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss the following phrases about Christ from Hebrew 1:1-3 and Colossians 1:15-19
 - a. The brightness of his glory
 - b. The express image of his person
 - c. The firstborn of every creature
 - d. All things were created by him and for him
 - e. By him all things consist
2. Discuss how the minds of people are blinded from the glorious gospel and its implications. (2Cor. 4:3-7)

Memory Scripture:

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. (2 Corinthians 4:7)

January 20, 2019

Focus: KNOWING GOD AND DOING EXPLOITS
Topic: KNOWING GOD THROUGH BELIEVING CHRIST
Text: John 14:1-14

Introduction

The act of believing expresses a trust which strengthens the relationship of the child of God with Christ. It is an expression of faith in what Jesus Christ has said which He emphasised in the John 14:1. Before Jesus addressed believing God however, He had to call attention to anything that troubles the heart. Whatever troubles the heart is a hindrance to faith and because human beings battle with so many of such issues, there is the tendency that they might not believe. Matters that weigh down the heart like finances, career, status, family, education, economy, unmet desires etc., have their way of dominating any life and will thus not allow room for the knowledge of God to take its proper place. If there is anyone who is troubled by this, faith will hardly take root and so Christ wants us to deal with them first. The believers have been enabled by the Holy Spirit not to allow their hearts to be troubled.

Jesus wondered that the disciples had been with him for some time and yet did not know Him, neither did they know where he said he was going. In essence, there is a possibility that we have accepted Jesus as personal Lord and Saviour for so many years and yet lack a balanced knowledge of Him. Just as Jesus went ahead to provide answers to their questions, He wants to address our lack of knowledge of Him too. If we allow Jesus to address all the pertinent questions as we go on with Him in the Christian walk, then our knowledge will not only deepen but we will thereby receive the power to trust and serve Him better. The disciples eventually became His Apostles and they did exploits for His glory. At congregational and individual levels, the focus of the believers should be to grow in the knowledge of Christ. We must be reminded that the essence of raising men in the body of Christ as Apostles, Prophets, Teachers, Pastors and Evangelists is so that the church can come to the full knowledge of the Son of God (Ephesians 4:13).

Lesson Aim: To believe Jesus and be truly committed to him

Discussion Questions:

1. Explain how Jesus Christ is the key to the knowledge of the Father. (John 14:5-10)
2. Discuss the relationship between the knowledge of the father and answer to prayer. (John 14:11-14)
3. Are you growing in the knowledge of the Son of God?

Memory Scripture:

If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. (John 14:7)

January 27, 2019

Focus: KNOWING GOD AND DOING EXPLOITS
Topic: GOD IS LOVE
Text: 1 John 4:7-21, Ephesians 3:16-19

Introduction

Love is a word that has been given so many meanings that people, young and old, often get confused. It is however good for the Christian to adopt the meaning that comes from the word of God only. The knowledge of God comes by revelation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Therefore, to know God as love can only come by revelation. As we grow in the knowledge of God, we will grow in love because God is love. To love others as God loves us is not in the power of the natural man. It is only through revelation and the help of the Holy Spirit that the believer is able to love as God loves. The simple way to confirm whether we love God is whether we love others. The quality of God's love is the sacrificial component or attribute. It seeks the benefit of the one to whom this love is directed. Anything short of this is not pleasing to God. As it cost God to love, so it costs his children to do but in so doing, they show that they belong to Him. In a similar breadth, God expects us to love others as we love ourselves. We know that God is love when we love others the way He has loved us (1 John 4:8).

The world is busy passing hatred and justifying its spread. The promotion of divisive tendency and repaying evil with evil now take the stage and there is tendency that believers will be caught in the antics of the devil to derail many. God does not have an example of love from the world but gives an example of what love is to the world. As God is love, the basis of whatever He does is love. In this same attitude He wants his children to live and act. The motivation for many people's behaviour is far from love and there is thus the need to check how we relate with others and God. Jesus does not take for granted that the world will love his followers back but warns that his own will receive hatred and persecution in return for the love they have shown. Some people desire to continue to enjoy the love of God without expressing the same love to others. The Bible warns that it is not possible to continue in this selfishness and assume that we love God. Since this motive is wrong, anyone with such a mind must repent and accept the true love coming from God with the readiness to manifest same to others. Ultimately, our knowledge of God is proven by the way we love others.

Lesson Aim: To learn to extend the love of God to others as is enjoyed and experienced.

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss the relationship between the knowledge of God and expression of love. (1John 4:7-20)
2. Discuss how a believer can be rooted and grounded in love. (Ephesians 3:17-19)
3. Does your life reflect that you know the God of love?

Memory Scripture:

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. (1 John 4:7)

February 3, 2019

Focus: KNOWING GOD AND DOING EXPLOITS
Topic: STEPS TO KNOWING GOD I
Text: Luke 9:23-26, 14:25-33

Introduction

To know Christ, we must become His disciples. Many desire to know the Lord but are not ready to know Him on His terms. One of the problems today, is that many think that when they become a Christian, they simply add Jesus to their lives. In other words, they keep, for the most part, living their lives with Jesus now added into the mix. Oh, they've changed a few things perhaps but it's still their lives and their will and their ways. They listen to Christian songs and speak the language and hang out with Christian friends but is this what Jesus has in mind for His followers? Jesus made it clear that to be His follower is not to add Him to who we are but to give up completely all that we are (good or bad) and become all that He is. That is the only way we can gain the true knowledge of God that is in Christ Jesus. It should be noted that these conditions laid down by the Lord does not exclude anyone who want to follow the Lord. Anyone who desires to know Him must submit himself to these conditions, which comes with grace and truth.

The cross was a means of carrying out the death sentence. For a criminal, he would carry the actual cross he would be hung upon. Jesus tells us to be the ones who welcome death to self by carrying our cross as a disciple. A disciple does this daily, knowing that Jesus Christ had nailed this old self to the cross. Whatever suffering of Christ, which God has purposed for us to endure we daily accept it, knowing that it is for our good and God's glory. It is only then that we are finally ready to follow Christ and know Him. These words 'follow me' clearly understood means to keep on following Christ. Just as we daily submit our will to Christ's, we also continually follow where He leads us. We walk as He walked. We love as He loved. Speak as He spoke. The journey to the knowledge of God through Christ Jesus only commences when we are dead to self and have picked up the blessed cross to follow after Christ.

Lesson Aim: To understand the necessary conditions to knowing and walking in the Lord

Discussion Questions:

1. Examine the context in which Jesus laid down the conditions for following Him in Luke 14:25-26 and discuss what it means to hate as expressed by the Lord (Luke 14:25-33)
2. Discuss the conditions for following Jesus (Luke 9:23-26)
3. Are you following Jesus on His terms?

Memory Scripture:

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:26)

February 10, 2019

Focus: KNOWING GOD AND DOING EXPLOITS
Topic: STEPS TO KNOWING GOD II
Text: Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 2:42-43

Introduction

When Jesus was going back to the Father in Heaven, He clearly instructed the disciples on how to raise people who will know and follow Him. He clearly instructed them on what to do to raise other disciples. The Lord commanded them to teach believers all that He taught them. Nothing is to be kept back from anyone who chooses to follow Jesus. Therefore, anyone who wants to know Jesus must make himself available to the teachings of the Lord. Those who are also saddled with the responsibility of raising and shepherding believers must know that their primary duty is to teach all that Christ taught by His Words and life. The teachings of Christ were not simply the things He taught by mouth but by His life and daily practical examples. When Christ is taught, under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, there is an increase in the knowledge of Christ and a corresponding life that expresses Christ.

On the day when the Holy Spirit came upon the Church, Peter preached and several thousands in Jerusalem repented of their sins and confessed Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. They were immediately baptised and settled in the church and they were devoted to learning from the Apostles; who were basically following the teachings of Christ. The disciples did not just listen to the Apostles' doctrine but they continued in it; they received it, retained it, and acted on its principles. That is the path way to the knowledge of God. They produced the fruit of Christ through love because they adhered to the teachings of Christ. If we want to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ, we must equally give heed to the teachings of Christ. All scriptures testify of Jesus Christ. If we know the scriptures, we will truly know Christ and be deepened in His knowledge.

Lesson Aim: To see the prerequisite for knowing Christ and being subject to His Word.

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss the things Jesus has commanded all His disciples to do. (Matthew 28:18-20)
2. Highlight the results of cleaving to the doctrines of the Apostles in the early church. (Acts 2:42-43)
3. Take a critical look at your life and address failure to live by Christ's teachings.

Memory Scripture:

And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. (Acts 2:42)

February 17, 2019

Focus: KNOWING GOD AND DOING EXPLOITS
Topic: STEPS TO KNOWING GOD III
Text: 2Cor. 3:15-18, 1Samuel 3:21, Jere 24:7

Introduction

The knowledge of God can only come by revelation. Personal effort, determination and desire to know God will amount to nothing if God does not reveal Himself. A lot of persons have fallen into diverse errors in their attempt to use their human faculties to understand the Scripture. This has led some into legalism, religion, and a form of godliness that is alien to God. "But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away" (2 Corinthians 3:15-16). It is clear that unto this day, the scripture is veiled unless one turns to the Lord to unveil it and give understanding. The Bible is different from other books because no one can comprehend it except the author, the Holy Spirit, enables such a person. We must therefore approach the reading of the Word of God with readiness to be instructed as the Word chooses to reveal Himself.

So anyone who reads the scripture without turning to the Lord cannot obtain the true knowledge of God. Such will only be spreading death. There is a veil upon the hearts of men that would not allow them to receive the knowledge of God through His Word. This veil is only removed in Christ Jesus. It should be understood that the Word of God cannot be approached like any other book. It is the only book that can only be understood when the author Himself unveils it to the reader. It is God that gives us a heart to know Him. Our only responsibility is to turn to Him for mercy and revelation. This was the case with Samuel. God revealed Himself to Him (1Samuel 3:21). Our duty is to be in a state of humility and obedience where we trust in the mercy of God to reveal Himself to us. It is the more of Him that is revealed to us that is the more of Him that we truly know. We must therefore, be humble and cry to the Lord like Apostle Paul, 'that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection'. (Phil. 3:10)

Lesson Aim: To learn to be humble to receive the revelation of the Lord.

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss how a believer can increase in the knowledge of God through the study of His Word. (2Cor. 3:15-16, 1Samuel 3:21)
2. How should a believer pray knowing that he needs God to reveal Himself before he can know Him? (Ephesians 1:17, 1Samuel 3:21, Jeremiah 24:7)
3. Are you growing daily in the knowledge of Christ?

Memory Scripture:

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)

February 24, 2019

Focus: KNOWING GOD AND DOING EXPLOITS
Topic: STEPS TO KNOWING GOD IV
Text: Ephesians 1:15-23, Col. 1:9-20

Introduction

Paul in his letter to the churches in Ephesus and Colossae revealed an important key to the knowledge of God. He did not only teach the churches correctly, he also spent time praying for them to know God and be filled with the fullness of God. The spirit of wisdom and revelation is key in anyone's quest for the knowledge of God. Any sincere seeker of the Lord must equally, without ceasing, cry to God in prayer for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. Without the eyes of understanding of the believers being enlightened by the mercy of God through His Holy Spirit, believers cannot be fruitful in the knowledge of God. It is as a believer is graciously filled with the knowledge of God that he becomes filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

When we hear about God's will, and in particular knowing God's will, we normally think of things like 'should I take that job? Should I marry that lady/man? Where should I live? What should I do?' What Step should I take? God gives us direction with these things if they are important but Apostle Paul was speaking about something higher and grander here. He was speaking about gaining insights into the eternal will, plan and purpose of God. Paul's prayer that the Colossians would be filled with the knowledge of God's will does not mean that he wanted them to know whether they should take a different job offer or marry a particular person. Rather, he's asking that they might know God's *moral* will as revealed in His Word. "Being filled" with this knowledge is a prayer that they would be controlled by this knowledge so that it would govern their every thought, word, and deed. Since God's moral will is a reflection of His holy character, Paul's prayer is that these believers would grow to know God Himself as He has revealed Himself in His Word.

Lesson Aim: To see the importance of prayer in the quest for the knowledge of God.

Discussion Questions:

1. Identify and discuss the elements contained in the prayer of Paul for the church in Ephesus. (Ephesians 1:15-23)
2. Discuss the premise and content of the prayer of Paul for the church in Colossae. (Col. 1:9-20)
3. What is the role of the ministers of God in ensuring that the people of God under them know the Lord?

Memory Scripture:

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: (Ephesians 1:17)

March 3, 2019

Focus: KNOWING GOD AND DOING EXPLOITS

Topic: STEPS TO KNOWING GOD V

Text: Proverbs 2:1-22, Col. 3:1-16, Jere 29:13, Deu. 4:29, Jere. 3:10, Psalms 119:2, 10, 58, 69

Introduction

God loves to reveal Himself to those who seek Him with all their hearts. He loves those who hunger and thirst for Him. There are instances in the Scripture when God revealed Himself to those who did not seek Him like Paul but we later read where Paul said, 'that I might know Him'. So, even when God graciously reveals Himself to us while we were not seeking Him, He later creates in us a hunger and thirst for Him. Unfortunately, some do not press on with this desire to know Him more and more. Even though God demands that we should seek Him with all of our hearts, it is still the Lord that works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. If we must know Him as we should and increase in the knowledge of Christ, then we must take advantage of the blessedness of seeking Him with all of our heart.

When persons truly seek the Lord, they always find him a God in and through Christ related with such seekers by bestowing favours upon them; granting them his presence; indulging them in communion with him; and favouring them with fresh supplies of his grace, and everything needful for them; every mercy, temporal and spiritual; that is, when they seek him in Christ, who is the only way to the Father, under the guidance and influence of the blessed Spirit; in the exercise of faith upon him and his promises; with fervency of spirit and ardour of mind; with diligence and importunity; with earnest desires and strong affections; and, as follows, with all sincerity of soul. It is therefore, the responsibility of the believers to continue to seek to know the Lord and become more like Him in all things. It is such a great blessing that we can seek Him, thirst after Him and be found of Him.

Lesson Aim: To know that we must seek God and deliberately do so with all of our heart.

Discussion Questions:

1. Identify and discuss the steps necessary in the search for God as explained in Proverbs 2:1-22.
2. What are the things above and how can we seek them? (Col. 3:1-16)
3. What does it mean to 'seek the Lord with all your heart'? (Jere 29:13, Deu. 4:29, Jere. 3:10, Psalms 119:2, 10, 58, 69)

Memory Scripture:

And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. (Jeremiah 29:13)

March 10, 2019

Focus: KNOWING GOD AND DOING EXPLOITS
Topic: THE FRUIT OF KNOWING GOD
Text: 1John 2:3-5, Daniel 11:32, Gal. 5:22-23

Introduction

The Lord Jesus Christ said, 'by their fruit you shall know them' (Matthew 7:16). The knowledge of God will certainly manifest in certain kind of fruit in any life. No one can say I know God without the fruit being found in the life of the person. John writes 1John 2:3, "By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments." 1John 2:4 then states the other side, exposing the false claims of the heretics, "The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." We need to be careful, though, not to reverse the order of Scripture. We are not saved by keeping God's commandments. We are saved by faith alone, but genuine saving faith necessarily results in a life of obedience to Jesus Christ. Also, the fruit of the Holy Spirit will be manifest in the life of anyone that truly knows the Lord. As we give the Spirit full control of our lives, He begins to do in and through us what only He can do - to shape us and grow us to look like Jesus. (2Corinthians 3:17-18)

Since God's goal for all His children is for them to be like Jesus (Romans 8:29), the Holy Spirit constantly works to rid their lives of the "acts of the sinful nature" (Gal 5:19) and display His fruit instead. Therefore, the presence of the "fruit of the Spirit" is evidence that the believer's character is Christ like. The holy, pure qualities that will appear in varying degrees and times, are not dependent on present personality or character, or even our life circumstances of the Christian. The Holy Spirit, dwelling in the heart, patiently and miraculously grows these traits for the purpose of making believers reflect the character of Christ to those around them, which ultimately draws them to God as well. Whenever a life is impacted with the knowledge of God, a corresponding fruit that reflects the life of Christ is produced in such life. The more we truly know God, the more of the fruit of the Holy Spirit will be seen in our lives. Any knowledge supposedly of God that does not produce the fruit of the Spirit in a life should not be embraced.

Lesson Aim: To know and bear the fruit that comes from the knowledge of God

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss the relationship between obedience to God and the knowledge of God. (1John 2:3-5)
2. Examine the fruit of the Spirit and its relationship with the knowledge of God. (Galatians 5:22-23)
3. Is your life showing fruit indicating that you are growing in the knowledge of God?

Memory Scripture:

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. (1 John 2:3)

March 17, 2019

Focus: KNOWING GOD AND DOING EXPLOITS
Topic: FALSE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD
Text: 1John 1:6, 2:3-14, Titus 1:16

Introduction

It's easy to claim that you know Him, but it's also easy to be mistaken. John writes in 1John 2:3, "By this we know that we have come to know Him..." He mentions in 1John 2:4 someone claiming, "I have come to know Him," but John bluntly says that this person "is a liar, and the truth is not in him." This phrase "I know Him" is the pious platitude of the believer who claims fellowship with God but does not respond to Him. They think that they know what spirituality is but they do not. The evidence of someone knowing God, and fellowship with Him is that he keeps His commandments. A simple, loving obedience is a natural result of fellowship with God. How do we know that we know Him? How do we know whether we are in fellowship with God? There is a test for determining this. That test is whether we have a genuine and continual walk with God in obedience.

To "keep His commandments" is to live in submission to Scripture. It is not a matter of doing what the preacher says or what the church says but what the Word of God says. Obeying Scripture is not legalism but a response to the known will of God in order to please Him. God holds us accountable for what we know about Him. He holds us accountable to the truth. The more we know the more responsibility we have to translate that knowledge into experience. It is important however to distinguish between knowing about Christ and knowing Christ. We may know very much about many of our great men, though we do not know them. Now, it will never save a soul to know about Christ. The only saving knowledge is to know Him, his very self, and to trust Him, the living Saviour, who is now at the right hand of God.

Lesson Aim: To beware of the counterfeit knowledge and ensure we are not just claiming we know Jesus.

Discussion Questions:

1. How can believers identify those with false claim of the knowledge of God? (Titus 1:16, 2Timothy 3:1-5, Matthew 7:16)
2. Discuss how a believer could avoid falling into the error of false knowledge of God. (1John 1:6, 2:3-14)
3. Do you know Christ or do you simply know about Him?

Memory Scripture:

They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate. (Titus 1:16)

March 24, 2019

Focus: KNOWING GOD AND DOING EXPLOITS
Topic: DANGERS OF NOT KNOWING GOD
Text: Matthew 7:21-23, 24:1-24, Ephesians 4:13-14

Introduction

Perhaps, the greatest danger known to man is that of not knowing God. This is so because the consequence of knowing or not knowing God would last for eternity. It is not simply about the dangers one would face on earth without the knowledge of God but about the eternal separation from God in eternity. From the scriptures, we can identify three categories of persons without the knowledge of God. The first category is those who have believed in Christ but are not rooted in the knowledge of Christ. Such people become prey to every false teaching and wind of doctrine. They will be deceived and tossed here and there by every wind of the doctrine. They will not be fruitful in their walk with God as they remain babies and run everywhere to seek solutions to problems that are also solved in Christ Jesus. They will be at the mercy of the false preachers of their time. Such would find Christianity to be frustrating not knowing that they are only being frustrated because of their ignorance.

The second group are the ministers of God or those involved in ministry who have equated the workings of miracles and wonders as same as having the knowledge of God. These are those who use the name of the Lord to cast out devils and do many wonderful things in the name of the Lord but continue to live in iniquity. Jesus said that He would say to such, "I don't know you. Depart from me ye workers of iniquity" (Matthew 7:21-23). If the Lord does not know such, it also means they did not know the Lord. They may only assume they know Him. It is a great deception to continue in sin while serving God. Others may not know about it but the Lord knows such. Then we have those who do not have the knowledge of God because they are without Christ. Believers must be careful not to fall into any of the categories.

Lesson Aim: To know and avoid the dangers of not knowing God

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss the dangers of not knowing God and not knowing Him as expected. (Matthew 7:21-23, 24:1-24, Ephesians 4:13-14)
2. Examine the antidote to deception and false teachings. (Ephesians 4:11-15)
3. Someone can be greatly used of God and still end up in hell. Discuss (Matthew 7:21-24)

Memory Scripture:

And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. (Matthew 7:23)

March 31, 2019

Focus: KNOWING GOD AND DOING EXPLOITS
Topic: THE REWARD OF KNOWING GOD
Text: Ephesians 1:15-23, 4:13-14, Daniel 11:32

Introduction

The Bible says, “But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 9:24). God greatly delights that His people know Him and know Him intimately. Blessed indeed is the man that knows the Lord. The most important knowledge anyone should pursue is the knowledge of God. Exploits that are acceptable to God are only made possible through the knowledge of Him. The knowledge of God brings confidence, clarity and hope to any life. Peter tells us something about people who know God. He said, “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord” (2 Peter 1:2). His statement reveals that both grace and peace are increased in the believer’s life by the full or thorough knowledge of God. Grace is God’s favour, His gracious care, faithful assistance, and help. It is the power (strength) of God to make man do what he ordinarily cannot do. Grace is the ability that makes the believer to overcome sin. It is therefore pertinent that we must make ourselves available to God who supplies grace.

We enjoy God’s help to the extent that we know Him. That should be easy to understand. If we do not know Him very well, we will not know what help He has available, or even that He is offering us any help. We must know Him in order to be able to accept the benefits He extends to us. The slave girl cried out saying the right things about God and who the brethren truly were, “these men are servants of the most high God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation” (Acts 16:17). If this slave girl were to say this to some believers today, chances are that they would go along with her sayings, accept her message and call others to listen to what she has to say. There is a problem when we overlook the power behind the proclamation and assume it is the Spirit of God yet it is her divination powers in action. Yes, the devil can use people to proclaim the truth about brethren but the knowledge of God saves believers from deceit and counterfeit spirits. The benefits that come with the knowledge of God cannot be quantified and it helps every aspects of the Christian life.

Lesson Aim: To understand and appropriate the benefits of knowing God

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss the benefits of knowing God with reference to this text Eph. 1:15-23, 4:13-14.
2. Highlight some of the benefits of knowing God from the following scriptures. Eph. 3:12 John 1:12-13 John 16:33 Ps. 40:4 Prov. 16:20 Luke 1:45 Matt. 17:20 Ps. 143:8 Prov. 3:5-6 John 12:46 Ps. 36:7 Ps. 91:2 Prov. 29:25 John 16:27 Rom. 5:1-2 John 15:11 Acts 10:42-43

Memory Scripture:

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.
(Proverbs 9:10)

April 7, 2019

Focus: MEN AND WOMEN OF EXPLOITS
Topic: OTHNIEL
Text: Judges 3:1-11

Introduction

God always wants His people to have allegiance to Him. Challenges, pressures, pleasures and other issues of life distract people from going on with God. Notwithstanding, God expects maturity and commitment in our relationship with Him. When people turn away from God, the consequences include suffering in the hands of the enemy. They reap the reward of their backsliding. However, when people repent and call upon Him, He orchestrates ways by which they are restored. He does not want any to perish. God makes a way of restoration for as many as will accept to go that way. In the above passage, the children of Israel turned away to idols; and they did evil in God's sight. They suffered for it but then called upon God who raised a leader for them in Othniel. It should also be noted that God deliberately left some of the nations of the land to prove Israel.

In the midst of Israel's backslidden state, there was a man, Othniel, who maintained his stand for God. He distinguished himself by his commitment to God when many were ungodly. God uses the separated and holy vessels for His assignment. Othniel was found suitable for God's use because he lived in obedience to God's laws and instructions; he did not follow the strange ways of the land but separated himself. God is always in search of whom to use for exploits but He will not use just anything or anyone. Othniel was a qualified vessel for the Spirit of God to be poured on him. The Spirit of God distinguishes and empowers men to do exploits for God. Othniel prevailed in his ministry assignment as a leader of the people of God because the Spirit empowered him. He was able to judge Israel (the Kingdom of God) and go to war against their enemies (the kingdom of darkness). Through him the land and the people of Israel had rest for forty years. That is a great exploit; bringing rest to the people of God.

Lesson Aim: To learn from Othniel a man of exploits

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss why and how God left some of the nations of the land to prove the people of Israel and its implication for the church. (Judges 3:1-6, 2:21-23, Deu. 8:2, 2Chr. 32:31, 1Peter 1:7, 4:12)
2. How does God raise men for exploits? (Judges 3:9-10, Matthew 4:19, 2Timothy 2:21)
3. Highlight some of the exploits God did through Othniel.

Memory Scripture:

And the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died. (Judges 3:11)

April 14, 2019

Focus: MEN AND WOMEN OF EXPLOITS
Topic: EHUD AND SHAMGAR
Text: Judges 3:12-31

Introduction

When Israel sinned again, God raised up a new oppressor. The Israelites did badly, and the Moabites did worse. Yet because God punishes the sins of his own people in this world, Israel was weakened, and Moab strengthened against them. If lesser troubles do not do the work, God will send greater. When Israel prayed again, God raised up Ehud. As a judge, or minister of divine justice, Ehud put to death Eglon, the king of Moab, and thus executed the judgments of God upon him as an enemy to God and Israel. Notice Ehud's address to Eglon. What message from God but a message of vengeance can a proud rebel expect? Such a message is contained in the word of God; his ministers are boldly to declare it, without fearing the frown, or respecting the persons of sinners. But, blessed be God, they have to deliver a message of mercy and of free salvation; the message of vengeance belongs only to those who neglect the offer of grace. The consequence of this victory was that the land had rest eighty years.

Ehud was a man of courage who risked his life for the people of God under the control of the Spirit of God. He can be likened to a preacher who is not afraid to speak the truth no matter the audience. It should also be noted that the Bible mentioned him being left handed. That shows that we are differently gifted and we must accept that fact about God's children. In parts of the world like Nigeria, there are myths that the left hand should not be used to serve. Everything created by God is good and can be used to honour God and men. Ehud did not take glory for the victory. He said "Follow after me: for the LORD hath delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hand." The victory he proclaimed was delivered to the hands of the children of Israel and not to His hands. Another important lesson in his life was that he was succeeded by a good successor in Shamgar and the people entered into the rest of the Lord under their leadership.

Lesson Aim: To learn from the exploits of Ehud and Shamgar

Discussion Questions:

1. Highlight and discuss the courage and qualities of Ehud.
2. Comment on the phrase 'a man lefthanded'.
3. Explain the connection between Ehud's success and Shamgar as his successor

Memory Scripture:

And after him was Shamgar the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad: and he also delivered Israel. (Judges 3:31)

April 21, 2019

Focus: MEN AND WOMEN OF EXPLOITS
Topic: DEBORAH
Text: Judges 4:1-14, 5:1-31

Introduction

The land had rest for eighty years, which should have strengthened them in their faith. Instead, it made them to feel secured and to indulge in their lusts. Thus the prosperity of fools destroys them. Jabin and his general Sisera, mightily oppressed Israel. This enemy was nearer than any of the former. Israel cried unto the Lord, when distress drove them to him, and they saw no other way of relief. Those who slight God in prosperity will find themselves under a necessity of seeking him in trouble. Deborah was a multifaceted woman like many in our days: a prophetess (spiritual and having personal relationship with God), a wife (correct family life, subject to her husband), and a judge (a minister of God or a professional). She was not an idle woman. She was a part of the team of warriors that brought victory to God's people. Although she was the judge in Israel, God instructed her to call for a man to lead the Army of God. She only went with Barak when Barak did not want to go without her by his side. She was not unassuming and did not confer on herself the role God had not conferred on her. She was a woman who could hear God accurately and would only take action when she has heard God.

Deborah returned with the army to sing the praise of God. Praise was inevitable after the victory God won for them. It is important for believers to know that our victory comes through God and we must always remember to give Him the praise He deserves at every point in our journey through life. No time should be lost in returning thanks to the Lord for his mercies; for our praises are most acceptable, pleasant, and profitable, when they flow from a correct heart. By this, love and gratitude would be more excited and more deeply fixed in the hearts of believers; the events would be more known and longer remembered. Whatever Deborah, Barak, or the army had done, the Lord must have all the praise. The will, the power, and the success were all from Him. In like manner, our victory over sin and satan comes from the Lord and no man must boast in himself but in the Lord.

Lesson Aim: To learn from the life of Deborah to depend on God and give Him the glory.

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss the qualities discovered in the life of Deborah as they relate to believers today. (Judges 4:4-14)
2. Identify and discuss the other people and things that contributed to the victory won in the battle and those that did not. (Judges 5:9-27)
3. Why did the children of Israel repeatedly fall into the hands of their oppressors? What lesson is there for believers today? (Judges 4:1-3)

Memory Scripture:

Praise ye the LORD for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves. (Judges 5:2)

April 28, 2019

Focus: MEN AND WOMEN OF EXPLOITS
Topic: GIDEON (I)
Text: Judges 6: 1-40

Introduction

Israel's sin was renewed, and Israel's troubles were repeated. Let all that sin expect to suffer for it. The Israelites hid themselves in dens and caves; such was the effect of a guilty conscience. Sin dispirts men. The invaders left no food for Israel, except what was taken into the caves. They prepared that for Baal with which God should have been served and God justly sends an enemy to take it away in the season thereof. The children of Israel fell into the error of turning away from God's instructions over and over again. They failed to learn their lessons from past errors and they continually suffered the repercussion. This time around, they were so greatly impoverished that their means of sustenance was taken over by the Midianites. This is what Satan seeks to do especially with lives that are not fully yielded to God in obedience. When believers disobey and commit abominable acts, they open the door for Satan to impoverish their lives and ultimately jeopardize their eternity. It is not right for believers to continually fall in and out of sin. We should rather live a dedicated, holy and separated life as God desires.

In every generation, God has a remnant of people who have separated themselves from the sinful practices of their generation. He turns over to them to carry out specific assignments when the need arises. Gideon experienced a visitation that placed an assignment upon his life. Gideon however felt too small to be used of God. He thought his family background has been too small and poor. God is not limited by our background, status, positions, gender, race etc. God can use any man for great exploits despite their humble background. Gideon was naturally afraid at the Angelic visitation but he was reassured of peace. The assignment given to him by the Lord seemed impossible and difficult but he obeyed and God gave him victory when they plotted to kill Him. God Himself will defend His people when they obey Him. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon and he became empowered and emboldened for his assignment. Believers need the empowerment of the Spirit of God to carry out their God-given responsibilities.

Lesson Aim: To learn from the exploits of Gideon to be entirely dependent on God.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why did the Lord refer to Gideon as a mighty man of valour when the situation around him does not in any way suggest he was one? (Judges 6:12, Romans 4:17, 1Samuel 16:7, 2Cor. 4:7-8)
2. Examine the use of fleece by Gideon to confirm whether God would use him to save Israel as it relates to God's children today. (Judges 6:36-40, John 20:29, Romans 8:14, 1Cor. 2:16)
3. What are the altars in your life that you need to break down for God to do exploits through you? (Judges 6:28-32)

Memory Scripture:

And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. (Judges 6:12)

May 5, 2019

Focus: MEN AND WOMEN OF EXPLOITS
Topic: GIDEON (II)
Text: Judges 7:1-25

Introduction

God provides that the praise of victory may be wholly to Himself, by appointing only three hundred men to be employed. Activity and prudence go with dependence upon God for help in our lawful undertakings. When the Lord sees that men would overlook Him, and through unbelief, would shrink from perilous services, or that through pride they would vaunt themselves against Him, He will set them aside, and do His work by other instruments. Pretence will be found by many, for deserting the cause and escaping the cross. God chooses to employ such as are not only well affected, but zealously affected in a good thing. In doing the duties required by God, we must not regard the forwardness or backwardness of others, nor what they do, but what God looks for in a person. He is a rare person who can endure that others should excel him in gifts or blessings, or in liberty; so that we may say, it is by the special grace of God that we regard what God says to us, and not look to men.

Gideon at this point of his life had come to develop a firm faith in the God of Israel personally. Although he was yet to experience the acts of God adequately beyond the testimonies of God from his fathers and the strange confirmation of the Fleece he set before God, he was obviously developing his roots in the ways of God. He was also in the process of being weaned from the spirit of fear, from hiding from the Midianites, to demolishing the altar of Baal and finally to raising an Army for God to confront the same enemy that had kept them in perpetual bondage and terror over the years. Since it is impossible to please God and walk with Him without faith, we therefore have an obligation to deal with every object of fear in our lives and progressively acquaint ourselves with the word of God. Gideon came to a point in His life when he could trust and obey every instruction of God even when it appeared that he was attempting the impossible in going to battle the Midianites with only a handful of men with seemingly 'inferior' weapons of war. Those who endeavor to know God and walk in His ways like Gideon did will gradually experience the manifestation of His acts and exploits in their lives.

Lesson Aim: To know more of the ways of God and become completely dependent on Him.

Discussion Questions:

1. Highlight and discuss the lessons for the church in the dealings of God with Gideon Judges 7.
2. What is the value of courage in Godly leadership? (Joshua 1:9, Deut. 31:6, 1Chron. 28:20)
3. What lessons can we learn from God's elimination methods? (Judges 7:1-7)

Memory Scripture:

And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand. (Judges 7:9)

May 12, 2019

Focus: MEN AND WOMEN OF EXPLOITS
Topic: GIDEON (III)
Text: Judges 8:1-35

Introduction

Here we have an account of how a disagreement ensued among two brethren just after God helped them to subdue their common enemy, the Midianites. God however gave Gideon the wisdom to quench the flame of the quarrel that could have degenerated into a big conflict. There are times when we are too quick to celebrate a major victory over the enemy without taking heed to hidden snares by the same enemy to destroy the effect of the victory being celebrated. So many revivals and moves of God in time past did not last for this same reason. We need to beware of snares of conflict, bitterness, pride and greed that have quenched the flames of revival in several places (Prov. 18:19).

Gideon did not allow the conflicts that arose from their brothers the Ephraimites to distract or discourage them from their singular purpose of a complete and total victory over their enemy the Midianites. Although about one and twenty thousand armies had fallen to the sword, Gideon was determined to obtain total victory over their enemy by pursuing the two kings and the remaining fifteen thousand that escaped with the king. This is a great lesson for the church of God today. We should neither be contented with nor settle for partial victory over sin, the flesh or the world. We can enjoy total freedom or victory over these elements that war against our soul (John 16:33). The modesty of Gideon is refusing the rulership position which was offered him after a major victory in battle is commendable. He however made a mistake that is all too common today. He did not know that God has lifted him up and people would follow him blindly. He made an ephod of gold which is not a bad thing in itself but the people worshipped it and that greatly displeased God. A sensitive leader must watch his actions and must neither do nor say anything that will turn the people away from Christ.

Lesson Aim: To be warned by the error of Gideon after great exploits

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss the reason the princes of Succoth and Penuel refused to help Gideon and the lessons therein for the believers. (Judges 8:1-17)
2. Examine the error of Gideon and how it should be avoided in the church. (Judges 8:22-27, Acts 14:8-18)
3. Why did the children of Israel turn from the Lord as soon as Gideon was dead? (Judges 8:33, Matthew 13:18-23)

Memory Scripture:

And the children of Israel remembered not the LORD their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side: (Judges 8:34)

May 19, 2019

Focus: MEN AND WOMEN OF EXPLOITS
Topic: ABIMELECH
Text: Judges 9:1-57

Introduction

Three years after Gideon's death, there was no trace of any revival or remembrance of the victory and rest that God used him to obtain for Israel, nor any reward for his family after forty years of peaceful rule in Israel. Similarly in our days, the sacrifice and labour of some of our past leaders who ruled in the fear of God to make our churches and nation great have been wasted. The gains of such godly rule have been replaced with hardship, corruption and various shades of crime. Abimelech who was one of his sons however became king after he murdered about seventy of his brothers except Jotham, who escaped by hiding. It is dangerous to seek leadership position with the hand of the flesh. Presumption is dangerous in any man's walk with God. Abimelech in his own case contrary to the pattern in Israel, manipulated others in order for him to emerge as king over them. There was no evidence that God was with him neither was he ever anointed to reign as king by any prophet of God.

He killed his brethren in order to reign and for some time, he appeared to have been successful. However, a time came that God avenged the evil he had done. God will often deal with secret sins in the open. Unless a person forsakes and repents of the sin, it will be met with the judgment of God. His reign was brief and full of trouble for both him and the people he ruled. His life and reign as king or judge ended on a very tragic note. Our God is indeed the God of justice and He will not allow evil to prevail for long. Just as Jotham survived the massacre initiated by Abimelech, God is also preserving unto Himself a remnant who will not keep silent night or day, till righteousness prevail in the land, and the tyranny of the wicked and corrupt leadership is ended.

Lesson Aim: To see the dangers of secret sins

Discussion Questions:

1. Why did God send an evil spirit to avenge for the sin of Abimelech and the men of Shechem and what are the lessons therein for believers? (Judges 9:22-24, 1Samuel 16:14)
2. Discuss the reason Abimelech was killed the way he was. (Judges 9:53-57)
3. Have you learned not to seek any position in God's house with the arms of the flesh?

Memory Scripture:

Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren: (Judges 9:56)

May 26, 2019

Focus: MEN AND WOMEN OF EXPLOITS
Topic: TOLA & JAIR
Text: Judges 10:1-6

Introduction

Quiet and peaceful reign, though the best to live are the worst to write of, as yielding least variety of matter for the historian to entertain his reader with. Such were the reigns of these two judges, Tola and Jair, who made but a small figure and take up but a very little room in this history. But no doubt they were both raised up of God to serve their nation and God's people in the quality of judges, not pretending, as Abimelech had done, to the grandeur of kings, nor, like him, taking the honour they had to themselves, but being called of God to it. Concerning Tola, it is said that he arose after Abimelech to defend Israel. After Abimelech had debauched Israel by his wickedness, disquieted and disturbed them by his restless ambition, and, by the mischiefs he brought on them, exposed them to enemies from abroad, God animated this good man to appear for the reforming of abuses, the putting down of idolatry, the appeasing of tumults, and the healing of the wounds given to the state by Abimelech's usurpation. Thus he saved them from themselves, and guarded them against their enemies.

Jair was a Gileadite, so was his immediate successor Jephthah, both of that half tribe of the tribe of Manasseh which lay on the other side Jordan. Though they seemed separated from their brethren, yet God took care, while the honour of the government was shifted from tribe to tribe and before it settled in Judah, that those who lay remote should sometimes share in it, putting more abundant honour on that part which lacked. Jair bore the name of a very famous man of the same tribe who in Moses's time was very active in reducing this country (Numbers 32:41; Joshua 13:30). God chooses what to highlight in every life for our admonition. Some may be lengthy and filled with events while others are short and peaceful. Either case, they are all written for our learning. Verse 6 of Judges 10 confirms that their cumulative 45 years reign brought righteousness to the land and only after their death did the people turn to unrighteousness. The greatest exploit anyone can do is to lead men to know Christ, who is the righteousness of God.

Lesson Aim: To learn lessons from the quiet lives of Tola and Jair

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the lessons for the church from the brief account of Tola and Jair?
2. How can we stand for and defend the body of Christ? (Ephesians 6:18, Jude 1:3)
3. Are you living for yourself or for the Lord?

Memory Scripture:

And after Abimelech there arose to defend Israel Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in mount Ephraim. (Judges 10:1)

June 2, 2019

Focus: MEN AND WOMEN OF EXPLOITS
Topic: JEPHTHAH
Text: Judges 11:1-40, 12:1-7

Introduction

Men ought not to be blamed for their parentage, so long as they by their personal merit have overcome their reproach. Jephthah speaks not with confidence of his success, knowing how justly God might suffer the Ammonites to prevail for the further punishment of Israel. Nor does he speak with any confidence at all in himself. If he succeeds, it is the Lord that delivers them into his hand; he thereby reminds his countrymen to look up to God as the Giver of victory. The same question as here, in fact, is put to those who desire salvation by Christ. If He save you, will ye be willing that He shall rule you? On no other terms will He save you. If He makes you happy, shall He make you holy? If He be your helper, shall He be your Head? We must not be discouraged in our Christian warfare by the difficulties we may meet with, when Christ has promised a crown of life to him that overcometh. Jephthah, born out of wedlock, had been rejected by his father's family and even stripped of any inheritance. Jephthah attained notoriety as a military adventurer who survived on banditry and had followers of the same kind. With this background and pedigree, he was certainly a most unlikely leader of God's people. However, at God's own time, leaders of his fatherland (Gilead) begged him to lead them in a war against the Ammonites.

However for whatever reason(s) that he had he made a foolish vow in spite of assurances from God. Vows are an integral part of the Old Covenant. However, Jesus Christ has warned believers not to make vows (Matt. 5:33-37). God enabled Jephthah to bring to Israel's leadership a combination of intelligence, knowledge, and military prowess that had not been seen in any judge before him. The way he handled the provocation of the Ammonite king before the war became inevitable confirms this. He appealed to reason and invited the king for negotiation. He refuted the king's allegations with facts of history. He also urged the king not to destroy the 300 year history of peaceful coexistence between the two nations. Although his peace moves were spurned, we should learn to live in peace with our neighbours (Romans 12:18). Equally important, he invited God at critical times (11:9-11, 21, 23, 27b). The war with Ephraim (a fellow Israelite tribe), was unnecessary and avoidable. We must desist from quarrels and fighting with other believers. Christ cannot and must not be divided. It is important to note that in spite of his frailties, God found him useful and not condemned (Hebrews 11:32). God did not encourage him in his failings; rather God used him despite his failings.

Lesson Aim: To learn from the workings of God in the life of Jephthah

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss critical lessons in the story of Jephthah.
2. Examine the role of the Word of God and the Spirit of God in Jephthah's victory? (Judges 11:14-27, 29)
3. Have you ceased from making vows or swearing even in the name of God?

Memory Scripture:

But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. (Matthew 5:37)

June 9, 2019

Focus: MEN AND WOMEN OF EXPLOITS
Topic: SAMSON (I)
Text: Judges 14:1-20, Matt. 7:21-23

Introduction

Samson was anointed from his mother's womb to 'begin the deliverance of Israel from the hand of the Philistines' (Judges 13:5b). His anointing was exhibited through seemingly sporadic but Holy Ghost directed extraordinary physical power that could not be overcome by many trained soldiers. Like Ehud before him, Samson was a lone ranger as he had no army around him. Samson in disobedience to the instruction of God that the children of Israel must marry among themselves, went ahead to marry among the very people God raised him to destroy. Believers are warned that bad company corrupts good character (1Cor. 15:33), and that we must not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers (2Cor. 6:14). Several of God's children today are suffering in very terrible marriages because they chose based on their feelings and personal preference instead of following the counsel of the Lord. They have married persons who have no relationship with Jesus; and those have become snares in their walk with God. God is merciful and will visit anyone who turns to Him in repentance. However, those who are yet to be married should be warned that to knowingly marry someone who is not sold out to Jesus Christ is to tempt the Lord.

The life of Samson demonstrates that God's anointing should not be taken for granted or regarded as a deserved personal property. Instead it should be regarded as God's gift to glorify Him and fulfil His purpose. He demonstrated disdain for his Nazirite vows by touching the lion's carcass and even scooping honey from it to eat. In his relationship with his groomsmen he demonstrated pride and gave an unedifying riddle which led to a number of unsavoury outcomes, e.g. anger, murder, disclosure of an guarded secret, threat to innocent people's lives, loss of wife, wastage of resources etc. His interaction with the Philistine woman of Timnah exposed his moral weakness, inability to keep secrets, susceptibility to anger, etc. The believer must be careful not to take the mercy of God for granted nor receive the grace of God in vain. We must not play with sin because there is no immediate consequence. Jesus did not die so that believers could only sin occasionally but to be completely free from sin. Also, the move of God and the gifts of the Holy Spirit operating in a life should not be construed to mean the life of that person is right with God. It is possible to walk in great power in ministry while living in sin and end up in the lake of fire (Matthew 7:21-23).

Lesson Aim: To learn to prioritise holy living above ministry gifts

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss the possibility and dangers of walking in sin while still walking in the power and anointing of God in life and ministry. (Matthew 7:21-23)
2. What are the lessons for parents and their unmarried children in the story of Samson? (Judges 14:1-4, 15, 1Cor. 7:39, Num. 36:6, Pro. 3:7-7)
3. Does people's view of you tally with that of God?

Memory Scripture:

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)

June 16, 2019

Focus: MEN AND WOMEN OF EXPLOITS
Topic: SAMSON (II)
Text: Judges 16:1-31, 2Chr. 15:2

Introduction

Hitherto, Samson's character appeared glorious, though uncommon. In this chapter, we find him behaving in such a wicked manner that many people questioned whether he was a godly man. But the apostle has determined this in Hebrews 11:32. The peculiar time in which Samson lived may account for many things, which, if done in our time, and without the special appointment of Heaven, would be highly criminal. It is hoped that all who indulge their sensual appetites in drunkenness, or any fleshly lust, would see themselves thus surrounded, way-laid, and marked for ruin by their spiritual enemies! The faster they sleep, the more secure they feel, the greater their danger. Samson knew that the Philistines were his enemies, yet he had an unquenchable desire for their women. In his first encounter, God mercifully delivered him by empowering him to escape. Sometime later he got more passionately involved with another Philistine woman, Delilah, and, of course, his enemies wisely seized that opportunity. They deployed temptations of money, veiled threat and nationalistic pride on Delilah who was a very willing tool. She in turn deployed temptations of ego, fornication, blackmail, nagging etc., on a morally-weak Samson.

It is noteworthy that Delilah acted on all the leads that Samson gave. From her first action Samson should have warned himself that Delilah's objective was sacrosanct and should have fled but he did not. He should have known that he was as good as already captured and dead immediately he disclosed the actual secret of his strength. Unfortunately he did not realise that God had left him. In the same vain, some Christians today ignore God's noiseless warnings. Samson had to face the consequences of his sin. He lost his strength, freedom, eyes, dignity, authority etc., and became a blind prisoner-of-war used for back-breaking grinding and entertainment. Sin must never be toyed with by a child of God, no matter his anointing. Samson reckoned with God after his sin had found him out. He cried out to God in two of the only three times that it was recorded that he ever prayed (Judges 15:18; 16:28 and 16:30a). God answered his prayers because He is merciful and gracious and will forgive our sins. It is noteworthy, however, that he is in the list of God's faithful servants (Hebrews 11:32).

Lesson Aim: To learn to avoid the pitfalls of Samson

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss the dangers of presumption in a man's walk with God. (Judges 16:20, Luke 2:44, Matt. 7:21-23, Hebrews 6:4-6, 10:26-29)
2. Examine the things that make the presence of God to depart from a life and how to maintain His presence. (Isaiah 59:1-2, 2Chr. 15:2, 1The. 5:19)
3. Are you absolutely sure the presence of the Lord is with you?

Memory Scripture:

For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, (Hebrews 10:26)

June 23, 2019

Focus: MEN AND WOMEN OF EXPLOITS
Topic: SAMUEL (I)
Text: 1Samuel 3:1-21, 7:3-17

Introduction

The child Samuel, though a child, ministered unto the Lord before Eli. As a small boy, Samuel found himself serving in the tabernacle under Eli, the priest. God saw in him a worthy instrument. At a time when the word of God was rare and with very few visions, God did not consider him too young and inexperienced to send to Eli who was the political and spiritual head of Israel! God can use any willing and yielding instrument. Samuel delivered the message in full despite the difficult nature of the message. He was faithful to declare the total counsel of God. Those who preach the gospel must not speak to please their audience but to make the mind of God fully known. Before God administers judgement on anyone, He sends several warnings and gives opportunities for repentance (I Samuel 2:27-35, 3:11-14). It is noteworthy that even though Samuel lived with Eli's children who were obviously older and more influential among the people and in Eli's family, Samuel did not follow their bad examples. He was consistent in his commitment to God's service and, of course, God continued to use him mightily.

It was in aggravation of the wickedness of Eli's sons that the child Samuel shamed them. They rebelled against the Lord, but Samuel ministered to him; they slighted their father's admonitions, but Samuel was observant of them; he ministered before Eli, under his eye and direction. It was the praise of Samuel that he was so far from being influenced by their bad example that he did not in the least fall off, but improved and went on. And it was a preparation for the honours God intended for him. He that was thus faithful in a little was soon after entrusted with much more. Let those that are young be humble and diligent. God replaced Eli with Samuel as the spiritual and political head of Israel. Samuel so led Israel in a way that pleased and honoured God that when the Philistines attempted to finally crush what they presumed to be a rebellion, God intervened. He fought the battle for the Israelites and gave them not only victory but sustained deliverance from years of oppression. When we fail God, we make it more unpleasant for Him to fight our battles but when we obey Him, He answers us.

Lesson Aim: To learn to be consistent with God in spite of our background

Discussion Questions:

1. Describe Samuel's consistency with God from his youth till he became an adult leader. (I Samuel 3:19-21, I Samuel 7:3-6, 9, 12-13)
2. What factors led to Eli's failure? (I Samuel 2:27-36; I Samuel 3:11-15, 18, I Samuel 15:22-23).
3. Are you influencing the world around you for Jesus?

Memory Scripture:

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)

June 30, 2019

Focus: MEN AND WOMEN OF EXPLOITS
Topic: SAMUEL (II)
Text: 1Samuel 12:1-2

Introduction

Samuel arranged a service at Gilgal where he transferred the leadership of the Israelites to the new king, Saul and delivered a thought-provoking farewell speech just as Moses had earlier done in Deuteronomy 32-33. Moses knew that he would soon die but Samuel knew that he was only going into retirement and would be around for some time more to pray for, guide and help the new king. Samuel thus provided a model for godly change in leadership. Samuel created a time of transition where both he and Saul could work together harmoniously. Then he gradually withdraws and allowed the new leader to assume his authority after providing a template for all outgoing leaders. His farewell speech addressed three critical issues, namely his stewardship, where the Israelites had failed and how their security and sustenance could be ensured. He asked pertinent questions about his performance and challenged them to point out his failures. The leadership issues he mentioned as the criteria for evaluation are those that God had prescribed in Judges 12:3b and Deuteronomy 17:14-17.

He warned that the new king would be tempted to amass wealth and might confiscate his subjects' properties. He declared that he had acted with integrity in the area of finance. He then proceeded to let them know where they had gone wrong. It was certainly not because he wanted to establish a ruling dynasty for his descendants. He did not want the Israelites to reject God and copy the examples of the idol-worshipping nations around them that had kings. He reminded them of God's leadership and all that He had demonstrated 'before their very eyes'. He then let them see the folly in rejecting God's leadership as well as the everlasting value in submitting to Him. It is not the humanly-designed structure that exalts a nation no matter how ingenious the design may be. It is righteousness that exalts and sustains a nation (Proverbs 14:34).

Lesson Aim: To learn the principles of finishing our race strong and well

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss the lessons for church leaders and members from the story of Samuel and the Israelites. (1 Sam. 12:1-5).
2. What leadership qualities can we learn from Samuel? (1 Sam. 12:1-6, 14-16, 20-25).
3. If you were to stand before God and men today as Samuel was then, would you be bold as Samuel to demand for public scrutiny of your stewardship?

Memory Scripture:

And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand. (1 Samuel 12:4)

July 7, 2019

Focus: KNOWING THE MIND OF GOD
Topic: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF ROMANS
Text: Romans 1

Introduction

Romans is one of the most profound valued books of the Holy Scriptures. When Paul wrote this epistle to the church in Rome, that congregation was already in existence for a number of years, for Paul writes that he had desired to visit them “these many years” (15:23). The Roman church was a group that had a large number of Jewish elements, but was also filled with Gentile converts from paganism, having both free men as well as slaves. The theme of the book centres on the Gospel of Christ (1:16, 17). Paul was deeply concerned that his readers would understand how a sinner may be received as righteous by a righteous God; and how a justified sinner should live daily to the glory of God. The letter to the Romans stands as a clear and systematic presentation of Christian doctrine.

Paul began by discussing that which is most easily observable in the world—the sinfulness of all humanity. All people have been condemned due to their rebellion against God. However, God in His grace offers us justification by faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. When we are justified by God, we receive redemption, or salvation, because Christ’s blood removes our sins. But Paul made it clear that the believer’s pursuit of God doesn’t stop with salvation; it continues as each of us is sanctified—made holy—as we persist in following Him. Paul’s treatment of these issues offers a logical and complete presentation of how a person can be saved from the penalty and power of his or her sin. As in all his writings, the focus is on Jesus Christ and all that He accomplished for mankind through His death and resurrection. He explained clearly in this epistle how to practically walk in the righteousness of Christ and the way the believer is dead to sin.

Lesson Aim: To know the mind of God contained in the epistle to the Church in Rome

Discussion Questions:

1. Examine the prayer life of Paul for the Roman church and how this relates to the role of ministers. (Romans 1:8-15, Col. 1:3, Eph.1:16)
2. Discuss the reasons for the revelation of the wrath of God. (Romans 1:18-32)
3. Explain the Gospel of God. (Romans 1:1-7, 16-17)

Memory Scripture:

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Romans 1:1)

July 14, 2019

Focus: KNOWING THE MIND OF GOD
Topic: GOD'S RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT
Text: Romans 2

Introduction

In this chapter the Apostle turns to address the Jews. His purpose is to prove that though they may deem themselves superior to the Gentiles and judge them, they are liable to more severe judgment; because, notwithstanding their superior knowledge, they commit the same sins. God will judge men, not by their professions but by their works. Those who are harshest in condemning others are often guilty of the same sins, though in their own ease they manage to find excuses which extenuate their shortcomings. Rid yourself of the beam in your own eye, that you may see clearly how to rid your brother of his mote (Matthew 7:5). All men, Jew or Gentile, good or bad, are under doom for breaking the righteous laws of God. The heathen who are sinners and know it (Rom. 1:18-32), the self-righteous who think they need no salvation (Rom. 2:1-11), and the religionist who makes a mere profession (Rom. 2:17-29) all stand on the same level before God. All of them are in need of the salvation God has provided. However moral or religious a man may be, if he has despised this divine plan in Christ Jesus, he is lost.

The Jews thought themselves a holy people, entitled to their privileges by right, while they were unthankful, rebellious, and unrighteous. All who act thus, of every nation, age, and description, must be reminded that the judgment of God will be according to their real character. And though the branches of man's disobedience are multifarious, they all spring from the same root. Those who truly repent must accept the death of Christ for their sins, and hate former sinfulness through the grace of Christ that teaches us to say 'no to every ungodliness' (Titus 2:12). Even the Gentiles, who have not the written law, have that within, which directs them on what to do by the light of nature. Conscience is a witness implanted by the Lord (Romans 2:15). Nothing speaks more terror to sinners, and more comfort to saints, than that Christ shall be the Judge. Secret services shall be rewarded; secret sins shall be then punished, and brought to light.

Lesson Aim: To stop hypocrisy and be right with God

Discussion Questions:

1. Identify and discuss how sin is dealt with in the dispensations of God. (Romans 2:12, Hebrews 1:1-2)
2. How can one be a Jew in heart? (Romans 2:4, 23, 28-29 Matthew 7:5)
3. Are you living in any form of hypocrisy?

Memory Scripture:

In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel. (Romans 2:16)

July 21, 2019

Focus: KNOWING THE MIND OF GOD
Topic: SAVED BY FAITH
Text: Romans 3

Introduction

The law could not save from sins, yet it gave the Jews advantages for obtaining salvation. Their stated ordinances, education in the knowledge of the true God and his service, and many favours shown to the children of Abraham were means of grace, and doubtless were useful to the conversion of many. The Scriptures were especially committed to them. Enjoyment of God's word and ordinances is the chief happiness of His people. God has made His promises and unbelief or professing otherwise cannot make them of no effect. He will fulfil His promises to His people, and bring His threatened vengeance upon unbelievers. God's judging the world, should for ever silence all doubting his justice. The wickedness and obstinate unbelief of the Jew, proved man's need of the righteousness of God by faith, and also his justice in punishing sin.

Paul laid the foundation for his entire discourse in this letter by revealing that salvation is now by faith and not by the law. No one will be saved by keeping the law and no one can maintain their salvation by keeping the law. This was a difficult message for those who have had the law all their lives and even for some professing believers today who still cannot understand how they are saved without the law. The statement in verse 23, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" is not the present state of the believers but that of the gentiles, Jews and anyone outside of Jesus Christ. Those who are now in Christ behold His glory and are being changed into the likeness of Christ from glory to glory (2Cor 3:18). The lack of understanding of how believers are saved and continue in the salvation outside of the law is the source of several errors in the body of Christ. Some are still keeping the law while some are trying to keep part of it to justify themselves. Christians are clearly warned that anyone who tries to justify themselves by keeping the law, Christ will be of no effect in their lives because such have fallen from grace (Galatians 5:4).

Lesson Aim: To understand that we are saved by grace and not by the law

Discussion Questions:

1. Examine the deeds of the law and the righteousness of God and discuss why no one can be justified by the law (Romans 3:19-27, Galatians 5:1-5).
2. How is a man justified without the deeds of the law and in what way is the law established? (Romans 3:28-31)
3. Are you justifying yourself through living by any of the laws? (Galatians 5:1-5)

Memory Scripture:

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. (Romans 3:28)

July 28, 2019

Focus: KNOWING THE MIND OF GOD
Topic: JUSTIFIED BY FAITH
Text: Romans 4

Introduction

In this chapter, Paul introduced Abraham to reinforce the truth that we are saved by faith and not by works of the law. Abraham was imputed to be righteous after he believed God even when he has not been circumcised. Circumcision only came as the seal of the righteousness of the faith he had when he was uncircumcised. Believers are saved in like manner. We are made righteous through the righteousness of Christ by faith. The outworking of this righteousness is a seal of the righteousness of Christ that is on the inside. God clearly demonstrated through Abraham that He was going to accomplish salvation for mankind through faith and not by the deeds of the law. If God has said that sin shall not have dominion over us (Romans 6:14), our response should be like that of Abraham who did not consider his dead body nor the dead womb of his wife but believed God to perform that which he had promised. If God has promised us complete victory over sin, will He not perform it?

To meet the views of the Jews, the apostle first refers to the example of Abraham, in whom the Jews gloried as their most renowned forefather. However exalted in various respects, he had nothing to boast in the presence of God, being saved by grace, through faith, even as others. It clearly appears from the Scripture, that Abraham was justified several years before his circumcision. It is, therefore, plain that this rite was not what qualifies him to be justified. And it was only an outward seal, appointed not only to confirm God's promises to him and to his seed, and their obligation to be the Lord's, but likewise to assure him of his being already a real partaker of the righteousness of God through faith. Thus Abraham is the spiritual forefather of all believers, who walk after the example of his obedient faith. The seal of the Holy Spirit in our sanctification, making us new creatures, is the inward evidence of the righteousness of faith.

Lesson Aim: To be rest assured that we are saved by faith

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the relationship between the experience of Abraham and the salvation of believers today? (Romans 4)
2. Discuss how a man who is saved by faith is a blessed man. (Romans 4:6-9)
3. Are you saved by faith in Christ Jesus?

Memory Scripture:

Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. (Romans 4:8)

August 4, 2019

Focus: KNOWING THE MIND OF GOD
Topic: JUSTIFIED BY FAITH II
Text: Romans 5

Introduction

It is imperative to know how mankind became sinful in order to understand the plan of God for man's redemption. Mankind became sinful after the sin of Adam and death came in because of sin. Paul explained therefore, that man is essentially a sinner by nature. The children of Israel were not sinners because they could not keep the law but they could not keep the law because they were sinners by nature. The sin of Adam, who was a similitude of Christ, was so powerful that it corrupted His seed. Thus everyone born since Adam is born in sin. The plan of God is to again use one man to bring salvation to mankind. So, God included us in the death of Jesus and by His resurrection, we can now live in righteousness and have peace with God. So, just as the sin of Adam condemned mankind, the righteousness of Christ is now freely made available for the salvation of mankind. The life of Christ is far more powerful than sin which He defeated on the cross. We know and experience this by faith.

A blessed change takes place in the sinner's state, when he becomes a true believer, whatever he has been. Being justified by faith he has peace with God. The holy, righteous God cannot be at peace with a sinner, while under the guilt of sin. Justification takes away the guilt, and so makes way for peace. This is through our Lord Jesus Christ; through him as the great Peace-maker, the Mediator between God and man. The saints' happy state is a state of grace. Into this grace we are brought, which teaches that we were not born in this state. We could not have got into it of ourselves, but we are led into it, as pardoned offenders. Therein we stand, a posture that denotes perseverance; we stand firm and safe, upheld by the power of God. And those who have hope for the glory of God hereafter, have enough to rejoice in now. Tribulation works patience, not in and of itself, but the powerful grace of God working in and with the tribulation. A right sense of God's love to us, will make us not ashamed, either of our hope, or of our sufferings for him.

Lesson Aim: To understand that our justification is by faith in Christ

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss what it means and explain how to have peace with God. (Romans 5:1, Col. 1:20)
2. In what way was Adam a figure of Christ and how did Christ undo the damage caused by Adam? (Romans 5:12-19)
3. Explain the purpose of the law mentioned in this chapter. (Romans 5:20-21)

Memory Scripture:

For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. (Romans 5:19)

August 11, 2019

Focus: KNOWING THE MIND OF GOD
Topic: DEAD TO SIN
Text: Romans 6

Introduction

In chapter five, Paul explained how God made grace available because of sin and how we have been justified by faith through grace in Christ Jesus. Some, in their ignorance, would think that the more they sin the more grace will be available. Such thinking is part of the error that arises when grace and faith are misunderstood. He continued his discourse in Chapter six by explaining that grace does not just make us to receive the forgiveness of sins; it also sets us free from sin. Those who do not understand this are the ones teaching grace that does not lead to holiness. Paul corrected this heresy by stressing that being dead to sin is not just theoretical but a reality that must be seen in the life of the believer. Jesus Christ dealt a decisive blow to sin. His blood took care of the manifestations of the sinful nature and his death put an end to the sinful nature often refer to as 'old man', 'flesh', 'self', 'old life' etc. It is very fundamental for every believer to know that their 'old man' is dead. Believers must reckon this to be so by believing that it is so. Not knowing and accepting this will lead to frustration in the life of many believers.

The believers now have a responsibility not to allow sin in their mortal bodies because they are truly dead to sin. It is not humility but foolishness to be apologetic about sin and to feel that man is hopelessly a sinner that cannot live above sin. It is however, true that man by himself cannot do away with the sinful nature but in Christ Jesus he becomes an instrument unto righteousness. The apostle is very careful in pressing on the necessity of holiness. He does not explain away the free grace of the gospel, but he shows that connexion between justification and holiness is inseparable. Let the thought be abhorred, of continuing in sin that grace may abound. True believers are dead to sin; therefore they ought not to follow it. No man can at the same time be both dead and alive. He is a fool who, desiring to be dead unto sin, thinks he may live in it. It is a great privilege to partake of the life of Christ and live free from sin. This is indeed wonderful and all glory be to God through Christ Jesus.

Lesson Aim: To understand how to live a life that is free from sin

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss verses 1 and 15 in connection with heretic doctrines that believers can continue to sin.
2. Explain how believers are dead to sin (Romans 6:9-14, 20-23)
3. What is the old man? (Romans 6:6, Gal. 5:25, Ezekiel 36:25-27, 1Peter 1:18, Eph. 4:22)

Memory Scripture:

For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. (Romans 6:14)

August 18, 2019

Focus: KNOWING THE MIND OF GOD
Topic: DEAD TO THE LAW
Text: Romans 7

Introduction

So long as a man continues under the covenant of the law, and seeks justification by his own obedience, he continues to live as a slave of sin in some form. Nothing but the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus can make any sinner free from the law of sin and death. Believers are delivered from the power of the law, which condemns sinners for the sins committed by them. And they are delivered from that power of the law which stirs up and provokes the sin that dwells in them. Understand that this not of the law as a rule, but as a covenant of works. In position and privilege, we are under a covenant of grace, and not under a covenant of works; under the gospel of Christ, not under the Law of Moses. The difference is spoken of under the similitude or figure of being married to a new husband. The second marriage is to Christ. By death we are freed from obligation to the law as a covenant, as the wife is from her vows to her husband. In believing powerfully and effectually, we are dead to the law, and have no more to do with it than the dead servant, who is freed from his master, has to do with his master's yoke.

The day of our believing, was the day of being united to the Lord Jesus. We started a life of dependence on Him, and duty to Him. Good works emanates from union with Christ as the fruitfulness of the vine is the product of its being united to its roots. There is no fruit to God, till we are united to Christ. The law, and the greatest efforts of one under it is under the power of corrupt principles and cannot set the heart right with regard to the love of God or overcome worldly lusts because it is still in the flesh, neither can it give truth and sincerity in the inward parts nor anything that comes by the special sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. Nothing more than a formal obedience to the outward letter of any precept, can be performed by us, without the renewing, new-creating grace of the New Covenant. Sin works by law, making it impossible for anyone to live righteously even when there is a determination to do so. It is only when a man becomes dead to sin, which also leads to death to law, that he is able to live out the righteousness of God.

Lesson Aim: To understand that the believer is dead to the law and experientially know it.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does it mean to be dead to the law? (Romans 7:4-13)
2. Discuss the purpose of the law (Romans 7:7, 5:20, Hebrews 10:1, John 5:39)
3. Explain the difference between law and grace and how a believer lives under grace. (Romans 5:20, Titus 2:11-12, 2Cor. 12:7-10)

Memory Scripture:

I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. (Romans 7:25)

August 25, 2019

Focus: KNOWING THE MIND OF GOD
Topic: THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE
Text: Romans 8

Introduction

It is important to understand that the sinful nature works by the law of sin. Paul explained this law in Chapter 7 when he described an experience where someone under the law of sin desires to do what is right but ends up doing what is evil. The person could will in his mind to do right but would find himself doing wrong because the law of sin is operating in him. When this is clearly understood, then one will be able to comprehend the way to live a victorious life as explained in chapter 8. Believers must know that when they became saved, God put the life of Jesus in them. This life operates as the law of the Spirit of life in Christ. So, just as the sinful man was powerless over his sinful nature not by choice, the new creation man in Christ Jesus is enabled by the life of Christ to live righteously. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus overrides the law of sin. Therefore, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us not by us. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2). This is not a futuristic deliverance but one that is already accomplished in Christ Jesus. We have been made free from the law of sin and death. Hallelujah!

Paul immediately warned that no one can appropriate this blessing and still go ahead living in the flesh. Anyone who does that will die according to the gospel. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Romans 8:13). This warning must be taken seriously because it is written to believers not to live as the unsaved. Anyone who teaches that a believer can continue to live in sin even after being saved is accursed. Such teachings are from the pit of hell. The Scripture contains several warnings to believers that continue to engage in the activities of the flesh including warnings from the Lord Jesus Christ in His letters to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3. However, when we truly understand the message of the cross; what Jesus Christ had accomplished for the believers, we will gladly live after the Spirit.

Lesson Aim: To understand and operate by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ

Discussion Questions:

1. Identify and discuss the laws mentioned in Romans chapter 8.
2. What will happen to a Christian living in the flesh? (Romans 8:6-14, Gal. 5:19-21)
3. To whom do all things work together for good and how can one continue to experience this? (Romans 8:28-30)

Memory Scripture:

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)

September 1, 2019

Focus: KNOWING THE MIND OF GOD
Topic: THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD
Text: Romans 9

Introduction

About to discuss the rejection of the Jews and the calling of the Gentiles, and to show that the whole agrees with the sovereign electing love of God, the apostle Paul expresses strongly his affection for his people. He solemnly appeals to Christ in sincerity with his conscience enlightened and directed by the Holy Spirit. He would submit to be treated as “accursed,” to be disgraced, crucified; and even for a time be in the deepest horror and distress to be able to rescue his nation from the destruction about to come upon them for their obstinate unbelief. To be insensitive to the eternal condition of our fellow-creatures is contrary both to the love required by the law and the mercy of the gospel. They had long been professed worshippers of Jehovah. The law, and the national covenant which was grounded thereon, belonged to them. The temple worship was typical of salvation by the Messiah, and the means of communion with God. All the promises concerning Christ and his salvation were given to them. He is not only over all, as Mediator, but he is God blessed for ever.

God chose Isaac, the child of promise, instead of Ismael, the natural son, to fulfil the promise. Like Paul we do not know why God made this choice, but God’s choice clearly demonstrates that the Jews were wrong to claim to be God’s special people simply because they had descended from Abraham. People do not become God’s children through human descent but only through faith (John 1:11-13). Paul was weighed down by the spiritual condition of his people, so also spiritual leaders of our days should be moved by the spiritual condition of their people. Paul however knows that what he has said concerning the sovereignty of God in dealing with human beings may be objectionable, with people accusing God of being unjust by choosing some and rejecting others. The issue is not about injustice, but about His sovereignty when dealing with His creation. God has given everyone opportunity to choose or reject Him. In the end, the Jews and the Gentiles will be one in Christ and will reign with Him forever.

Lesson Aim: To learn that God’s grace of salvation is for all.

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss the truth about the sovereignty of God. (Romans 9:6-29)
2. In what ways are the believers today still stumbling through the law? (Romans 9:30-33, 7:4, Gal. 2:11-14, 3:1-3, 5:1-4, James 2:10-11)
3. How are you responding to the mercy of God that has brought you to the knowledge of Christ?

Memory Scripture:

So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. (Romans 9:16)

September 8, 2019

Focus: KNOWING THE MIND OF GOD
Topic: THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD
Text: Romans 10

Introduction

Paul stated that the Jews were zealously devoted to God, but their zeal was not based on knowledge (Hosea 4:6). Having zeal for God is not a bad thing. However, Paul's pre-Christian zeal, like that of others Jews was not based on a correct understanding of the righteousness that God requires. In his early days, Paul believed personal victory came through self-righteousness. By the time he wrote to the Romans, he understood that the only way to gain victory was through God's righteousness. God justifies sinners and accepts them only as they accept the gift of salvation in Christ. How can one be saved from God's just condemnation? Paul explained in Romans 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead you will be saved. Paul identifies four steps that have to be taken for any person to come to faith. First, the sending of the preacher; second, the preaching of the Gospel; third, the hearing of the message preached; and fourth, the response to the message, which is believing in Christ and calling on the name of the Lord. These steps suggest that those who have already confessed Christ and believed in Him will be used by God to help others hear the message of the cross.

The Jews built on a false foundation, and refused to come to Christ for free salvation by faith, and large numbers in every age do the same in various ways. The strictness of the law showed men their need of salvation by grace, through faith. And the ceremonies for shadowed Christ as fulfilling the righteousness, and bearing the curse of the law. So that even under the law, all who were justified before God, obtained that blessing by faith, whereby they were made partakers of the perfect righteousness of the promised Redeemer. The law is not destroyed, nor the intention of the Lawgiver disappointed; but full atonement was made by the death of Christ for our breach of the law. That is, Christ has fulfilled the whole law, therefore whoever believes in him is counted just before God as though he had fulfilled the whole law himself. Sinners never could go on in vain fancies of their own righteousness, if they knew the justice of God as a Governor, or his righteousness as a Saviour.

Lesson Aim: To learn that the only way to salvation is through Christ.

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss what it means to have zeal for God without knowledge and its implications. (Romans 10)
2. How can one be saved from condemnation and obtain God's righteousness? (Romans 10:9-11)
3. Have you responded to the great salvation message?

Memory Scripture:

But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people. (Romans 10:21)

September 15, 2019

Focus: KNOWING THE MIND OF GOD
Topic: THE SALVATION OF ISRAEL
Text: Romans 11

Introduction

The condemnation of Israel in chapters 9 and 10 prompts Paul to come back to the fate of Israel in chapter 11. God had established a special relationship with Israel as a nation through whom the nations of the world would come to know Him. Paul reminds his readers of a historical precedent. Elijah, long ago, had thought that he was the only remaining God-fearing Jew. God informed him that seven thousand others had not bowed their knees to Baal. As in the time of Elijah, God has not rejected all Jews but has chosen a faithful remnant with whom he still works. When we face conflicts, we are sometimes tempted to believe that we are alone in standing for God and become discouraged. We need to remember that God has His people, His remnant, even in difficult situations. Paul further explains that the present state of the majority of the Israelites is a temporary one that is part of God's plan to make it possible for Gentiles to come to salvation and thereby make Israel envious, bringing them back to their God through Christ. Paul makes the point to Gentile Christians that his call to preach to them should not be interpreted as meaning that God had abandoned the Jews.

He makes it clear that his purpose in stressing that he is the apostle to the Gentiles is to somehow arouse the Jews to jealousy in order to save them. Therefore, Gentile believers should not consider themselves superior to Jewish believers in the church. The restoration of the Jews is, in the course of things, far less improbable than the call of the Gentiles to be the children of Abraham; and though others now possess these privileges, it will not hinder their being admitted again. By rejecting the gospel, and by their indignation at its being preached to the Gentiles, the Jews become enemies to God; yet they are still to be favoured for the sake of their pious fathers. Though at present they are enemies to the gospel, for their hatred to the Gentiles; yet, when God's time comes, that will no longer exist, and God's love to their fathers will be remembered. True grace seeks not to confine God's favour. Those who find mercy should endeavour that through their mercy others also may obtain mercy. Not that the Jews will be restored to have their priesthood, and temple, and ceremonies again; an end is put to all these. They are however to be brought to believe in Christ, the true Messiah whom they crucified, and become one sheep-fold with the Gentiles, under Christ the Great Shepherd.

Lesson Aim: To see that all believers belong to the family of God.

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss the implications of Romans 11:25 for the Gentile believers and those yet to believe.
2. In what way are the gifts and calling of God without repentance? (Romans 11:25-29, 1Samuel 2:27-33, Rev. 2:5)
3. What will happen to those who refuse the message of salvation like the children of Israel?

Memory Scripture:

*For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.
(Romans 11:25)*

September 22, 2019

Focus: KNOWING THE MIND OF GOD
Topic: THE TRANSFORMED LIFE
Text: Romans 12

Introduction

The apostle having closed the part of his epistle wherein he argues and proves various doctrines which are practically applied, here reveals important standards emanating from Gospel principles. He entreated the Romans, as his brethren in Christ, by the mercies of God, to present their bodies as a living sacrifice to God. This is a powerful appeal. We receive from the Lord every day the fruits of his mercy. Let us render ourselves; all we are, all we have and all we can do. It is acceptable to God: a reasonable service, which we are able and ready to give a reason for, and which we understand. Conversion and sanctification are the renewing of the mind; a change, not of the substance, but of the qualities of the soul. The progress of sanctification, dying to sin more and more, and living to righteousness more and more, is the carrying on of this renewing work, till it is perfected in glory. It should be noted that we are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice because it has been purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ. We have been bought with a price. God is not asking for what belongs to us but what belongs to Him.

The great enemy to this renewal is conformity to this world. Take heed of making plans for happiness, as though it lay in the things of this world, which soon pass away. Do not fall in with the customs of those who walk in the lusts of the flesh, and mind earthly things. The work of the Holy Ghost first begins in the understanding, and is carried on to the will, affections, and conversation, till there is a change of the whole man into the likeness of Christ, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. Thus, to be godly is to give ourselves entirely to God. Paul also deals with living a transformed life in the church and society. As Christians, we live in the community of believers, which is here described as the body of Christ. Since we are all equal before God, believers must watch out for pride. Pride undermines unity in the church. God has given each believer a measure of faith, so that he or she can function as God intended. He compares the church to a human body, which has many different parts. Each part has a different function, and all parts need to work together if the body is to function well. Paul lists different gifts that God has given to different believers to enable them to serve the community. He encourages Christians to use their gifts to build up the church. The gifts must not be used selfishly, as they are given to build up the Body of Christ.

Lesson Aim: To present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God.

Discussion Questions:

1. Examine the manner in which a believer is supposed to offer his body to God. (Romans 12:1, 6:13-19, Hebrews 10:22)
2. Discuss how a believer can be conformed to this world and how not to be conformed to the world. (Romans 12:2, 1John 2:15-17)
3. Examine the marks of a true Christian. (Romans 12:9-21)

Memory Scripture:

Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:21)

September 29, 2019

Focus: KNOWING THE MIND OF GOD
Topic: PUTTING ON CHRIST
Text: Romans 13

Introduction

Whatever the persons in authority over us may be, yet the just power they have, must be submitted to and obeyed. In the general course of human affairs, rulers are not a terror to honest, quiet, and good subjects, but to evil-doers. Such is the power of sin and corruption that many will be kept back from crimes only by the fear of punishment. Thou hast the benefit of the government; therefore do what you can to preserve it, and nothing to disturb it. This directs private persons to behave quietly and peaceably where God has set them (1Timothy 2:1, 1Timothy 2:2). Christians must not use any trick or fraud. All smuggling, dealing in contraband goods, withholding or evading duties, is rebellion against the express command of God. Thus honest neighbours are robbed, who will have to pay the more; and the crimes of smugglers, and others who join with them, are abetted. It is painful that some ministers of the gospel should countenance such dishonest practices. The lesson here taught it becomes all Christians to learn and practise, that the godly in the land will always be found the quiet and the peaceable in the land, whatever others are.

Paul has also been speaking about the need for Christians to pay whatever they owe to civil authorities. He continues with the topic of debt, but enriches it by adding that Christians are not allowed to have outstanding debt (failure to pay others what is rightly theirs), except for the continuing debt to love one another. The expression 'one another' refers to both Christians and non-Christians. The knowledge that our salvation is near, that the day is almost here, must be enough to wake us up from sleep so we start living as the people of God. Hence, Christians need to prepare themselves by putting aside the deeds of darkness and by putting on the armour of light, and living as examples in these evil days.

Lesson Aim: To learn the practical and Christlike way of living the Word of God in the society.

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss the Christian obligations to civil authorities. (Romans 13:1-7, Acts 5:29)
2. "Owe no man anything but to love one another". Discuss the meaning of this statement. (Romans 13:8)
3. Have you fulfilled the law by loving others? (John 15:12, Galatians 6:2)

Memory Scripture:

Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.
(Romans 13:8)

October 6, 2019

Focus: KNOWING THE MIND OF GOD
Topic: GLORIFYING CHRIST IN ALL THINGS
Text: Romans 14

Introduction

In this chapter, Paul gave general guidelines with respect to things that are neither commanded nor forbidden in the Scripture. It means that, among Christians, there is room for tolerance and differences regarding such issues as eating habit. While some Christians strictly observe special days, others may not see the importance of such. However, whatsoever is the observance of days and eating, all must be done to honour the Lord, since no believer lives to himself and no one dies to himself. Also, Christians are enjoined not to judge each other with reference to the practice of morally neutral issues because each individual is responsible to God. Therefore the right judgement belongs to Christ. This means that the weak and strong Christians alike shall all stand, not at each other's judgment seats, but before the judgment seat of Christ. The judgment will be based on what we have done in this life. "So then each of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12). This position should not be confused for situations where some persons in error hold certain days as days of worship because it is found in the covenant of the law. Worship must be in spirit and in truth not in a location or on a certain time.

Differences of opinion prevailed even among the immediate followers of Christ and their disciples. Nor did Paul attempt to end them. Compelled assent to any doctrine, or conformity to outward observances without being convinced, would be hypocritical and of no avail. Attempts to produce absolute oneness of mind among Christians would be useless. Paul directed his counsel primarily to the mature Christians urging them to practice self-limitation in exercising their liberty, lest they offend others "if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love" (Romans 14:15). Ensure you do not destroy your brother with the food you take, by leading him away from the faith. Christians can eat all foods and need not follow dietary laws of the Old Covenant because they are relatively trivial and their fulfilment is not so important and essential to God's reign. What is of paramount importance is the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Lesson Aim: To learn to glorify God in all things

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss what the Bible teaches the Christian regarding eating habits and observation of special days of worship (Romans 14:3-6).
2. In what ways is the position discussed in question one different from that of those who still keep certain days in accordance to the law? (Galatians 2:21, 5:2-5, Romans 3:20)
3. How can our eating habit become a stumbling block to another believer and how can we avoid that? (Romans 14:14-15 & 28)

Memory Scripture:

So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. (Romans 14:12)

October 13, 2019

Focus: KNOWING THE MIND OF GOD
Topic: SERVING LIKE CHRIST
Text: Romans 15

Introduction

Paul in chapter 14 of Romans wrote that Christian should not use their liberty to obstruct the faith of others; nor judge them on foods and observance of a special day. The Apostle continued with other injunctions such as bearing each other's burden in Chapter 15. According to Paul, Jesus Christ is the model of conduct in relationships between the weak and strong Christians. His example demands mutual forbearance and love; and if this is followed, it will result in a unity of harmonious praise to God. The strong in faith must not only adjust to the weak in faith but as a matter of fact, accept them as they are while the weak must also accept the strong in faith. Christian liberty was allowed, not for our pleasure, but for the glory of God, and the good of others. We must please our neighbour, for the good of his soul; not by serving his wicked will, and pleasing him in a sinful way. Christ's whole life was a self-denying, least indulgent life. And he is the most advanced Christian, who is the model Christ to which all Christians must conform.

The Scriptures are written for our use and benefit, as much as for those to whom they were first given. They have played a major role of preserving the Scriptures. That comfort which springs from the word of God, is the surest, sweetest, and greatest stay to hope. The Spirit as a Comforter is the earnest of our inheritance. This like-mindedness must be according to the precept of Christ, according to his pattern and example. It is the gift of God; and a precious gift it is, for which we must earnestly seek him. Our Divine Master invites his disciples, and encourages them by showing himself as meek and lowly in spirit. The same disposition ought to mark the conduct of his servants, especially of the strong towards the weak. The great end in all our actions must be, that God may be glorified. Nothing is more profound, than the mutual love and kindness shared by those who profess Christ.

Lesson Aim: To learn to love and serve one another like Christ

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss practical ways Christians can bear one another's burden. (Romans 15:1-2, Galatians 6:1-10, 1The. 5:14)
2. Highlight and examine the lessons in Paul's prayer request. (Romans 15:30-33)
3. Are you bearing the burdens of others?

Memory Scripture:

Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. (Romans 15:19)

October 20, 2019

Focus: KNOWING THE MIND OF GOD
Topic: APPRECIATING MEMBERS OF HIS BODY
Text: Romans 16

Introduction

This final chapter of the book of Romans contains commendations of Phoebe and other Christians for their work of the gospel. Phoebe is seen in this chapter as a servant of the church in Cenchrea. She was described as a Helper who supplied support and funding for worthy causes and should be received and assisted in any business she may need by the Christians in Rome. The greetings of Christians in Rome by Apostle Paul served three main purposes. First is to give Phoebe a list of people on whom to call when she arrives. Secondly, it is to ensure she knows who is to receive the letters and lastly, it is to show God's awareness of each individual's impact in the work of the gospel. So the list contains a number of significant women and numerous others. In this letter, Paul warned the believers in Rome to be wary of those brethren who cause divisions and offences among believers and that they should be avoided. He described such deviance as those with smooth words and flattering speech that deceive the hearts of the simple. He then acknowledged their simple obedience to the word of God and encouraged them to continue in their good works.

Paul recommends Phebe to the Christians at Rome. It is good for Christians to help one another in their affairs, especially strangers as we know not what help we may need ourselves. Paul asks help for one that had been helpful to many; "he that watereth shall be watered also himself" (Proverbs 11:25). Though the care of all the churches came upon him daily, he could remember many persons, and send salutations to each, mentioning the particular character of each, and expressing concern for them. Lest any should feel themselves hurt, as if Paul had forgotten them, he sends his remembrances to the rest, as brethren and saints, though not named. He adds, in closing, a general salutation to them all, in the name of the churches of Christ. Believers of today are therefore admonished not to try to become experts about the details of the evil deeds but to proclaim the ultimate triumph of Christ and His church over all evils. Also, Christians are enjoined to be part of the good works in their local assembly and not to be among those who cause confusion and division so as to fulfil their selfish interests.

Lesson Aim: To learn to appreciate and recognize the role and help of others in our lives.

Discussion Questions:

1. Examine Paul's associates and their contributions to the church, the gospel and himself.
2. What are the lessons for the believers from the synergy between Paul and Tertius? (Romans 16:22)
3. Are you raising people who can be useful for the Kingdom expansion in your life?

Memory Scripture:

I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord. (Romans 16:22)

October 27, 2019

Focus: KNOWING THE MIND OF GOD
Topic: HEAD COVERING
Text: 1Corinthians 11:1-16

Introduction

The discourse of Paul in this chapter is centred on verse 3. Paul wanted the Church to know more clearly about the headship of Christ. Without a clear revelation of the headship of Christ, the matter of head covering becomes a religious matter instead of a spiritual one. When Paul spoke about Angels, he clearly showed that he was dealing with a spiritual matter and not a cultural issue. Also, he said that the matter is the same for all the churches; therefore it was not peculiar to only the church in Corinth. However, the foundation of the matter of head covering is in knowing Christ as the head as Paul stated. *“But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God”* (1 Corinthians 11:3). Unless we understand this, the next statement in verse 4 and subsequent verses will not make sense. As believers, one thing remains as our focus and that is to please the Lord in everything we do, it has to be His will and not ours at all. Apostle Paul in all his writings to the Church made it clear that his very intention is to make Christ known more and more to believers and to please Him in every way.

As some Argue that this instruction on head covering for women and uncovering for men is basically for a particular Church, that is, Corinthian and not for all Churches, we will do well to see how Paul concluded this ordinance in 1Cor. 11:16 *“But if anyone seems to be contentious (argumentative) we have no such custom nor do the Churches of God”*. This means that just as it is applicable to the Church in Corinth; it is equally applicable to other Churches of God. Head covering for women and uncovering for men are like water baptism and Holy Communion which are physical activities but with great spiritual implications. It is not just the formality of women covering their heads or men uncovering their heads when they pray, it is the recognition of the headship of God over Christ, Christ over the man and the man over the woman. The man and the woman are showing forth that they recognize God’s divine arrangement and order. When angels attend to prayers, they equally observe it. This makes it a real spiritual matter. There is no need to argue with those who have not understood the headship of God and of Christ as they cannot understand why head uncovering and covering are crucial spiritual matters to be obeyed.

Lesson Aim: To understand the Biblical position on head uncovering and covering.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why did Paul say, “For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels?” (1 Cor. 11:10)
2. How is the Headship of God related to head uncovering and covering for believers? (1Cor. 11:1-12)
3. Do you have any argument on the matter of head uncovering or covering? (1Cor. 11:16)

Memory Scripture:

Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? (1 Corinthians 11:13)

November 3, 2019

Focus: KNOWING THE MIND OF GOD
Topic: GIVING WITH THE MIND OF CHRIST
Text: 2 Cor. 9:1-15, Pro 19:17, 28:17, 22:9, Rev. 15:17, Heb. 13:16 Acts 2:43

Introduction

Our Lord Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Act 20:35). What we give to the Lord or give in his name is never lost but is securely invested. Giving should come from a willing heart since God does not compel us to give. "Every man shall give as he is able according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which He hath given thee" (Deu. 16:17). The early Christians at Jerusalem were not under any compulsion but of their own accord had all things in common. They sold their possessions and goods and laid the money at the apostles' feet to be divided among all as anyone had need. We all know what happened to Ananias and Sapphira when they allowed the manifestation of the flesh to rule their hearts. When members of the body of Christ are compelled to pledge or give, sometimes, beyond their means, it is not biblical. Therefore, Christians should be taught that God accepts a cheerful and willing giver, and then they will not be intimidated by contrary teachings to do otherwise by false preachers.

We are encouraged to give to the poor. (Proverbs 22:9, Deu. 15:7-10) The responsibility to identify and to give to the poor is with the individual as it is within his means to quietly help. In Acts 2, we notice that brethren were guided by the love of God poured into their hearts to give by the Holy Spirit. The motive behind our giving must be love and an understanding that we own nothing because we have been purchased by Christ. The Bible says, "But who so hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? Let us not love in word or by tongue alone but in deeds and in truth". (1John 3:17-18) May the Lord help us to be sensitive to and promptly respond to needs around us whenever necessary.

Lesson Aim: To know and understand how and why we should give by Bible standard

Discussion Questions:

1. Identify and discuss God's principles of giving. (2 Cor. 9:1-15. Pro 19:17, 28:17, 22:9, Rev. 15:17, Heb. 13:16 Acts 2:43)
2. What was responsible for the selfless giving in the early church and how can the believer imbibe this character? (Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-35, John 13:34)
3. Are you walking in the love of Christ towards men?

Memory Scripture:

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)

November 10, 2019

Focus: KNOWING THE MIND OF GOD
Topic: HOLY COMMUNION
Text: Luke 22:14-22, 1Cor. 11:23-29, Acts 2:46

Introduction

The Lord's Supper is also called "The Lord's Table" (1Corinthians 10:21), "Communion," "Cup of Blessing" (1Corinthians 10:16), and "Breaking of Bread" (Acts 2:42). In the early Church, it was called also "eucharist" or giving of thanks (Matthew 26:27). The account of when Jesus instituted this ordinance is given in Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:19-20, and 1 Corinthians 11:24-26. The elements used to represent Christ's body and blood are bread and wine. The kind of bread, whether leavened or unleavened, is not specified. In 1Corinthians 11, Paul addressed certain matters of worship in the life of the Corinthian church. Among other concerns he speaks about their observance of the Lord's Supper. Paul explains that he is giving them instruction about the Lord's Supper on the basis of the instruction he had received from the Lord.

Even though we are born again, the Bible enjoins us to examine ourselves as a requirement before coming to the Lord's Table. We must repent of any sinful attitude or deeds. "But let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup: for he that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (1 Cor. 11: 28-29). Let us again be reminded that to bring sin or carelessness to the Lord's Supper amounts to profaning the name and person of Christ. The responsibility lies on us to truthfully examine ourselves before coming to the Lord's Table. The Lord Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me". Brethren, let us remember that each time we partake of Holy Communion we re-establish the rites of His death and resurrection in our conscience and proof His abundant and unlimited grace. Many Christians have testified to God's miracle and deliverance after a Holy Communion Service. We praise God for this but the main purpose is to remember Christ and all that he accomplished on the cross through His death and resurrection.

Lesson Aim: To recognize that the Holy Communion is an ordinance instituted by Christ

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss the purpose of the Holy Communion. (1Cor. 11:26, Matthew 26:26-29)
2. The early church broke bread (took the Holy Communion) from house to house. How can the church return to this Biblical practice? (Acts 2:46)
3. How frequent should the communion be taken?

Memory Scripture:

And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, (Acts 2:46)

November 17, 2019

Focus: KNOWING THE MIND OF GOD

Topic: WATER BAPTISM

Text: Matt 28:18-20, Acts 2:38, 44, 8:12, 36-38, 9:19, 10:47-48, 1 Cor. 1:13-16, Rom. 6:3-5.

Introduction

The word baptism comes from the Greek word *baptizo* which means to immerse or dip. To baptize something, then, means to completely submerge it in a liquid. In a biblical sense, to baptize a person in water means to put that person completely under the water, then immediately raise him or her up again. According to the Bible, water baptism is a symbolic act whereby a new Christian identifies with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Water baptism is a public profession of a person's repentance and faith in Jesus Christ and a way of giving outward testimony to an inward work of God. It also shows clearly how God looks upon every believer, as dead, buried and risen with Christ (Rom. 6:1-6). Water baptism should not be seen as an infusion of some virtue or even grace into the dead sinner. Water Baptism is also a public declaration of our faith, so it is good to do it in the presence of witnesses.

Water Baptism is an ordinance instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ shortly before his ascension (Matt. 28:14). In the early church the moment a person believes he is dead to the sinning world, law as (Born again) and that Christ died for him, he has his burial immediately. In deed the Lord Jesus expressly taught His disciples to bury everybody that believes. On the day of Pentecost, 3,000 believed and immediately the 3,000 were buried that very day (Acts 2:41). It was so for the Ethiopian Eunuch, the moment he believed he said, "Here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?" (Act 8: 36). The same applied to Paul. The moment he believed he was baptized with water (Act 9:18). So also, Cornelius with his household (Act 10:47). In the early church, anyone who believed on the Lord Jesus believed also that he was dead (Rom. 6:3-5). It should be noted that as it is a crime to bury a living soul, so it is a sin to baptize anyone who is not saved by Jesus. Water baptism is to be observed by every believer, young or old.

Lesson Aim: To understand the importance and necessity of water baptism

Discussion Questions:

1. The early church baptized immediately those who believed in the Lord Jesus. This is not the practice today in many of our congregations. Why? Discuss (Acts 8:36, 9:18, 8:12, 10:47, 2:41)
2. What is the significance of water baptism? (Rom. 6: 1-5, 1Cor. 12:13-14)
3. Have you been baptized by water since you believed?

Memory Scripture:

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 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 6:3-4)

November 24, 2019

Focus: KNOWING THE MIND OF GOD

Topic: BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Text: Matthew 28:18-20, Matthew 3:11, Acts 2:1-4, 38, Acts 1:5-8, Acts 4:31, 1Cor. 12:13, John 14:26

Introduction

The Holy Spirit is a person, an invisible person; He shares the Godhead with the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is a very important personality to walk with in following Him, we are actually following the Lord Jesus Christ. He is actually God Himself, the third Person in the Trinity. Just before the ascension to heaven of Jesus Christ, He instructed His disciples. "But ye shall receive power after that Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Act 1:8). To be baptized with the Holy Spirit means to be completely immersed in the Him; filled to overflowing with the Holy Spirit. It also implies being endued with power from on high. This experience is not meant for unbelievers. It is meant for those who have repented from their sins and have surrendered themselves to Christ (Acts 2:38-39).

Baptism in the Holy Spirit is an infilling of power which Jesus performs in the life of one who is completely yielded to Him. This baptism is not a requirement for salvation. Rather, it is a gift for those who have already received new spiritual birth. The Lord Jesus Christ is the baptizer with the Holy Spirit (John 16:7). To receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit, we ask in prayer and our expectation should be from the Lord Jesus Christ. He can choose to baptize with Holy Spirit without involving anyone to lay hands and pray for the person (Acts 10:44-46). At other times, the Lord uses other believers who have had this experience to instruct, pray for and lay hands on those in need. A Christian cannot walk effectively with God without the help of the Holy Spirit as He occupies a central position in fellowship with God. The Holy Spirit has been given to Christians as our Teacher, our Advocate, our Helper, our Guide and our Intercessor. He is a person we can talk with, walk with and relate with in all of our spiritual pursuits.

Lesson Aim: To understand the baptism of the Holy Spirit and experience it.

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss the importance of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
2. Discuss the difference between the initial baptism of the Holy Spirit and the re-filling of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:1-4, 4:31)
3. Have you been baptized in the Holy Spirit?

Memory Scripture:

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. (Acts 4:31)

December 1, 2019

Focus: KNOWING THE MIND OF GOD

Topic: BORN AGAIN

Text: John 3:1-15, Num. 29:7-9, 1John 3:9, 2Cor. 5:17

Introduction

Since the original sin in the Garden of Eden by Adam (Genesis 3), all mankind is born in a corrupted state by inheritance. It is by that our souls need rebirth; made pure and righteous again the way God created us to be. He provided the way for this to happen, but because God gave us free will, we have a choice to accept or not. To be born again requires repentance and spiritual rebirth through faith in Christ Jesus. It means being regenerated by the Spirit of God. It is true that today many people who claim to be born again do not fully understand this work of God. To be born again is not to be reformed, rehabilitated, and made better or re-educated. To be born again is to be a new creation in Christ Jesus, living in vital union with Christ (Colossians 2:6, 7). At conversion, we do not merely turn a new leaf; we begin a new life under a new Master. The sinful nature inherited from Adam is terminated and the eternal life of Jesus Christ is birthed (or imputed) into the believer. To be born again is a real spiritual experience, not a superficial change. *"When someone becomes a Christian he becomes a brand new person inside. He is not the same any more. A new life has begun!"* (2Cor. 5:17 NLT) YOU ARE TRANSFORMED!

The term "born again" refers to a new beginning in the relationship between God and the person concerned (John 3:3, 7). God adopts those born again as his children (Romans 8:15, 16; Galatians 4:5; 1 John 3:1). Similar to those who are legally adopted, they experience a change of status, becoming part of God's family (2Corinthians 6:18). Jesus explained that this birth can only happen by the Holy Spirit and water (John 3:1-3). To be born again is not a slogan neither is it a derogatory term. It was pronounced by the mouth of Jesus. It is the most blessed experience any human being can have on the face of the earth. Without being born again, the things of God can never make sense to the natural man (John 3:5). Jesus said: "Unless anyone is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God" (John 3:3). So being born again prepares a person to reign with Christ in God's Kingdom. This Kingdom rules from heaven, so the Bible describes the "new birth" as providing an inheritance that is "reserved in the heavens" (1 Peter 1:3, 4). Those who are born again are given the conviction that they will "rule together as kings" with Christ (2 Timothy 2:12; 2 Corinthians 1:21, 22).

Lesson Aim: To understand what it means to be born again and experience new life.

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss why and how a sinner can become born again. (John 3:3-15, Num. 21:4-9, Acts 2:38, Rom. 10:9)
2. Examine what happens when a person is born again? (2Cor. 5:17, Ezekiel 36:26, Gal. 6:15, 1John 3:9, Col. 3:9-10)
3. Are you born again?

Memory Scripture:

That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. (John 3:6-7)

December 8, 2019

Focus: KNOWING THE MIND OF GOD

Topic: ADULTERY AND FORNICATION

Text: Hebrews 13:4, Prov. 5:15-23, 6:20-35, 7:1-27, Rev. 2:20-23, 1Cor. 6:15-20, Romans 6:12-13, 2Tim. 2:22, 1Pet. 2:11, Gal. 5:19

Introduction

Adultery is a sexual desire or sexual act by a married person with an unmarried or married person. Adultery is one of the manifestations of the flesh (sinful nature) and the Bible warns that an adulterer will not inherit the Kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19). The people of the world call adultery cheating but God calls it a sin. According to Jesus Christ, merely lusting after the opposite sex (or same sex) in the heart constitutes adultery (Matthew 5:28). There is inter-adultery; that is, adultery between two married persons. There is also intra-adultery; that is, adultery between a married person and an unmarried person. It does not matter what you are going through in your marriage, there is no justification for adultery. When a believer who is married commits adultery with another married person, the sin is against five parties. He/she has sinned against his/her spouse, the spouse of the partner in sin; his/her own body, the body of Christ and God. Adultery does not happen suddenly. It often starts subtly with secret attraction, flirting, ungodly compliments, lustful excitement, secret meetings, and unnecessary gifts. One of the reasons some persons persist in adultery is because they foolishly assume that they will never get caught or that there will never be a consequence. They forget that the person who will have them get caught is God and He is the one who will ensure there are consequences.

Fornication on the other hand is sexual desire and/or intercourse between people not married to each other or sexual lust by an unmarried person. Subsets of fornication are pornography and masturbation which have become silent killers among the younger generation. Several persons perished in the Bible because of sexual sins. It is important to understand the consequences of these sins so that we can apply our hearts to wisdom. Often the devil focuses peoples' minds on the pleasure of sexual sins while blinding their eyes to the consequences. The pleasure of sexual sin is very short and temporal but the consequences could be eternal. The good news however, is that the Lord has made provision for deliverance and total victory over sins; sexual sins inclusive. Believers can live pure and sanctified lives through Christ Jesus. God has made provision for the holiness He requires in Christ Jesus. There is therefore no excuse for any child of God to continue in any form of sexual sins.

Lesson Aim: To see the dangers of sexual sins and appreciate God's provision for our victory

Discussion Questions:

1. Identify the dangers of sexual sin. (Heb. 13:4, 1Cor. 3:17, 1Cor. 6:9, 18, Rev. 2:22-23, 21:8, Prov. 6:27-32, Matt. 5:8, Rom. 1:18, Heb. 12:16-17)
2. Discuss God's provision for a victorious life over sexual sin. (Rom. 6:6-14, Pro. 5:1-3, 6:23-24, 7:1-5, Psa. 119:11, Col. 3:16, 1Cor. 6:18, 2Tim. 2:22)
3. Why do some persons persist in sexual sins after knowing the consequences?

Memory Scripture:

But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. (1 Timothy 6:11)

December 15, 2019

Focus: KNOWING THE MIND OF GOD

Topic: THE LAKE OF FIRE

Text: Rev. 19:20, 20:7-15, Matt. 5:22, 18:9, 25:41, Mark 9:43-48, Jude 1:7

Introduction

The phrase lake of fire is found only four times in the Bible, and each occurrence is in the book of Revelation. The first passage tells us that when the kings of the earth come to fight against Christ at His second coming, the beast and false prophet will be “cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone” (Revelation 19:20). The Bible says that the lake of fire “means the second death” (Revelation 20:14; 21:8). The first kind of death mentioned in the Bible resulted from Adam’s sin. This death can be reversed by resurrection and will eventually be eliminated by God (1Corinthians 15:21, 22, 26). The lake of fire is a term used in only a few verses near the end in the book of Revelation (Revelation 19:20; 20:10, 14, 15; 21:8). Jesus refers to Gehenna/hell fire several times (Matthew 10:28; Mark 9:43; Luke 12:5), as well as an “outer darkness” (Matthew 8:12; 22:13). These all seem to be different references to the same thing. Hell fire, the lake of fire, and outer darkness are all terms describing the final destination of those who reject Christ. This is a state of complete separation from God, never-ending and inescapable.

According to the Bible, the lake of fire is the “second death.” This is the ultimate consequence of sin, which implies to be totally cut off from God. The lake of fire will be a place of perpetual suffering and misery. Scripture indicates that every person whose name is not in the Book of Life will be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15). The lake of fire will also be the fate of the beast and false prophet from the end times (Revelation 19:20), as well as Satan himself (Revelation 20:10). The Bible indicates that both death and Hell will also be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14). Hell fire and lake of fire are used interchangeably to describe the place of final destruction prepared for satan and all those who follow him; all those who reject Christ. Death and hell appear to be evil spiritual personalities that are on the side of satan. They are therefore also cast into the lake of Fire. Jesus warned that everyone should do whatever is required not to spend eternity in hell. Glory be to Jesus Christ who has made provision for our salvation!

Lesson Aim: To know that there is the lake of fire and avoid it

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the nature of the lake of fire? (Matt 3:12, 13:42&50, Rev. 19:20, 21:8)
2. Discuss who will end up in the lake of fire and why. (Rev. 14:9-10, 20:7-15, 21:8, Matt. 13:41-42, 2The. 1:8-9, Matt. 5:22)
3. Who was the lake of fire prepared for and how can anyone avoid going to the lake of fire? (Matt. 25:41, 18:9, John 3:16)

Memory Scripture:

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:15)

December 22, 2019

Focus: KNOWING THE MIND OF GOD
Topic: THE BIRTH OF CHRIST
Text: Matt. 1:18-21, Luke 1:26-38, 2:1-7

Introduction

God's first reference to Jesus Christ was made in Genesis chapter 3. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15). While still speaking to the devil, God made it known that He Himself will put enmity (opposition, hostility) between the devil and the woman; between the devil's seed and the woman's seed; and the seed of the woman (not the woman herself but her seed) will bruise the devil's head (destroy him permanently), and the devil will bruise his heel (hurt him temporarily). When God referred to "her seed," the seed of the woman - He was speaking about the coming Christ, the Messiah, the Saviour, who was to be born of a woman (Mary) but Joseph was not his father. Mary conceived when the Holy Spirit (Who is the only true God Himself) overshadowed her (Luke 1:26-38), and about nine months afterward she gave birth to Jesus, the son of God, and this Jesus is now both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). The fact of Mary being pregnant before the consummation of their marriage indicated to Joseph that Mary had had sex with another man, for this was the usual way that any woman could get pregnant at that time.

Joseph was a righteous (just) man and therefore he wanted to continue doing what the Law of Moses (God's Word at that time to God's people) commanded in a situation like that, which was that he would have to put away an adulterous wife from him (Deuteronomy 24:1). Joseph did not want to point her out making her an example (in the sense of causing her to be a public spectacle, a public disgrace) and so he purposefully willed to release her without inviting public attention (secretly so that others would not notice what happened). If others were convinced that Mary was an adulteress they may have stoned her to death for breaking the law (Deuteronomy 22:22). It is good to know the historic account of the birth of Jesus Christ but it is more important to experience the purpose of His birth in our lives (Matthew 1:21, Luke 1:31). The goal of the birth of Jesus Christ is redemption. He came to save mankind from the life of sin, transmitted to Adam from Satan, which has been handed down to all mankind. It is effort in futility if one knows all the story of the birth of Christ and celebrates Christmas yearly without knowing deliverance from the yoke of sin, which the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus had accomplished.

Lesson Aim: To understand the purpose of the birth of Jesus Christ

Discussion Questions:

1. Highlight the important lessons in the conduct of Mary and Joseph in the account of the birth of Christ. (Matt. 1:18-22, 2:13-15, 19-23)
2. Discuss the implications and importance of the birth of Jesus Christ. (Matt. 1:21, Luke 1:31)
3. Are you walking in the purpose of the birth of Jesus Christ?

Memory Scripture:

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21)

December 29, 2019

Focus: KNOWING THE MIND OF GOD

Topic: PERFECTION

Text: Deu 18:13, 1Kings 8:61, 2Ch 16:9, Matt 5:45, Col. 1:28, James 1:2-4, 1Pet. 5:10, Eph. 4:13, 2 Tim 3:16-17

Introduction

Perfection looks too exceptional and the human mind conceives it to be impossible to attain. It is common saying that no human being is perfect. Though it is good to consider human weakness as a factor of perfection, it is more important to bring God who is expecting perfection into the whole picture. The scriptures point us to perfection as God's standard and it is actually the minimum requirement to have his approval. We have seen remarks on kings and his nation indicating that God rejected them because their hearts were imperfect. This shows that perfection is not a matter of impeccable dressing, eloquent speech, status in society or approval of men. It is simply God's approval of a life and readiness to accept and help such a person. It is pertinent to note however that perfection is possible only for those who depend on God to help them, and their trust and hope for his response.

Trial of faith comes the way of believers and it should be clear that God does not use this to cause their downfall. Rather, it is prerequisite for their perfection. Those who therefore complain during adversity or wish it away and even pray hard against it, are not doing themselves any good. Gold must pass fire to be refined, but glitters after refinement. Any piece of gold cannot glitter except it has passed through fire. The book of James shows that the believer also is refined in the furnace of affliction or trial. We therefore need to encourage one another as we journey through life and encounter different experiences meant for our perfection. Training in the word of God is also expected to bring about perfection of the people of God, though by it we are also instructed, corrected, disciplined, indoctrinated and strengthened. Hearing the word, learning it through reading, memorisation, meditation and obedience provide the necessary nourishment to strengthen believers to do exploits for the Lord.

Lesson Aim: To learn to walk with the Lord in perfection

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss why human beings think they cannot be perfect and what is wrong with that feeling (2Ch 16:9)
2. Discuss how it is possible to walk in perfection before God:
 - a. By our faith (Deu. 18:13, 1Pet 5:10, Mat 5:44, 48)
 - b. By the word (2Tim 3:16-17)
 - c. Following examples (1Kings 8:61, 2Chr 16:9, Gen 6:9)
 - d. In what we say (James 3:2)
 - e. In our vocations (Gen 39:21)
3. Are you perfect before God? What will you do to become and remain perfect before God?

Memory Scripture:

But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. (1 Peter 5:10)