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The Proof That A Man Is Justified By Faith Alone And Not By Works

Study 7 : Galatians 4:8-11 —Teacher's Outline and Study Bible™

<p>1. Remember your former life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. You did not know God b. You served false gods <p>2. Look at your present life: You know God & are known by God</p>	<p>IV. THE FIVEFOLD APPEAL TO BE JUSTIFIED BY FAITH ALONE, 4:8–5:12</p> <p>A. Appeal One: Do Not Turn Back, 4:8-11</p> <p>8 Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.</p>	<p>9 But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?</p> <p>10 Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.</p> <p>11 I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.</p>	<p>3. Consider your turning back</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What you turn to: Weak rituals & worldly pursuits b. What the results are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Bondage 2) A wasted life
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Section IV

THE FIVEFOLD APPEAL TO BE JUSTIFIED BY FAITH ALONE

Galatians 4:8–5:12

Study 1: APPEAL ONE: DO NOT TURN BACK

Text: Galatians 4:8-11

Aim: To forge ahead in our Christian walk: to never turn back.

Memory Verse:

“But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?” (Ga.4:9).

SECTION OVERVIEW:

A person is justified by faith and not by law nor by works. It does not matter how many good works a person does nor how good he may become; he can never secure perfection. Therefore, a man can never earn or win the right to live in God’s presence. A man cannot make

God accept him—put God in debt—by being good and doing good. God is perfect; therefore, if a man is ever going to live in God’s presence, it will be because God loves man enough to provide some way for man to become perfect. Glorious news! God has provided the way through His very own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. When a man believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, God takes His belief and counts it as righteousness, as perfection. God accepts the man on the basis of faith, the kind of faith that says, “Lord God, I believe that your Son died for me. He took my imperfection, my shame, my sin, my being short of your glory; and He died for it all. I honor Him. I give my life, *all I am and have*, to serve Him. Save me—accept me in Him.”

When a man approaches God in such a spirit, he honors God’s Son, Jesus Christ. And God honors any person who honors His Son. He honors the person by doing the very thing the man believes or asks. If a man believes in Jesus Christ for righteousness, then God counts that man’s belief (commitment to Christ) as righteousness. This is justification; this is the way a person becomes acceptable to God.

Justification by faith in Jesus Christ has been proven. This has been the point of the last six passages in the Book of Galatians. Now Paul launches a fivefold appeal to the church: a fivefold appeal to be justified by faith.

SECTION OUTLINE:

- A. Appeal One: Do Not Turn Back (4:8-11).
- B. Appeal Two: Restir Affection for the Minister of God (4:12-20).
- C. Appeal Three: Listen to What the Law Really Says (4:21-31).
- D. Appeal Four: Stand Firm in the Liberty of Christ (5:1-6).
- E. Appeal Five: Obey the Truth (5:7-12).

INTRODUCTION:

Are you the kind of person who is willing to take a risk? The true Christian knows that following Christ is well worth any risk. But think for a moment:

- ⇒ How many experiences meant for the Christian believer have you missed out on because you turned your back?
- ⇒ Why is turning back so appealing at times?

Maybe it is fear or just being perfectly content to keep things like they are. Or maybe your excuse is a complete lack of faith.

If you are thinking about turning back, or if you have already started down the backward journey, listen closely to this first appeal: Do not turn back!

OUTLINE:

- 1. Remember your former life (v.8).
- 2. Look at your present life: you know God and are known by God (v.9).
- 3. Consider your turning back (vv.9-11).

1. REMEMBER YOUR FORMER LIFE (v.8).

Remember what you were when you were an unbeliever, before you ever believed in Jesus Christ and experienced salvation. The unbeliever is characterized by two significant traits.

1. The unbeliever does not know God. This means that he does not know God in a personal way; God's Spirit does not dwell in the unbeliever filling the unbeliever with the fullness of God. The unbeliever does not experience God's...

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| • divine nature (2 Pe.1:4) | • life |
| • presence | • power |
| • assurance | • confidence |
| • care | • provision |
| • love | |

The unbeliever does not have the day-by-day experience of knowing God, of experiencing the presence, fellowship, communion, care, and provision of God—of experiencing the abundance of life with God. And as tragic as any of his shortcomings, the unbeliever does not have the absolute assurance of living forever with God.

2. The unbeliever serves false gods. Even before their conversion, the Galatians had sensed their need for God. They had not been atheists or agnostics. They had been a religious people seeking to become acceptable to God. Their worship had been the worship of *many gods* including both Jupiter (Zeus) and Mercury (Hermes). This, of course, meant that they had been enslaved to heathen gods, religion and worship, rituals and ceremonies, rules and regulations, superstitions and idols.

Note what is said about the unbeliever: he serves gods which *by nature are not gods*. By their very nature, the objects of man's worship are not gods. How could they be, for they are only a creation of the unbeliever's mind. He may count them as gods, but they are no more than ideas in his own mind.

ILLUSTRATION:

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to stumble upon a community of idolaters? What kinds of things would offend you? Take a glimpse into one such community:

As we peek into one of their homes, several things strike us as *unChristianlike*. It seems that their worship is centered in their main living area. The entire room has been arranged to give honor to this inanimate object (which makes all kinds of noises and appeals to the senses of those who worship it). All of the available seating in this room is angled in order to provide the best seating and viewing arrangement possible.

Upon further investigation in this house, the closets are full of sewn materials which are hung on metal hanging ornaments. One can only guess about this culture, but there seems to have been a lot of value placed upon this area of the living quarters.

Seeing their bookkeeping records might give some insight on what they valued, you find the only entry on the ledger is entitled "self."

Let's leave this uncivilized culture behind. What kind of people are they anyhow? Sad to say, but it looks a lot like our culture. The inanimate object displayed in the main living area is a television. For many, it has become an object of worship as its pull has overcome many a Christian.

The closet represents the value our culture places on apparel—

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especially the trendy and expensive type. Many are judged for what they wear on the outside and not for what dresses the heart.

Finally, how we invest our financial resources tells a lot about what we consider important. Our culture is one that promotes “me first” and then others if anything is left over (by accident).

Some would respond and say, “But we don’t have idols. We *are* civilized.” However, the evidence is clear: anything that is placed before Jesus Christ is an idol. Let this rule of thumb keep you from the sin of idolatry.

APPLICATION 1:

What most people worship is only a creation of their own mind’s. They have an idea of god, who he is and what he is like, and they worship that idea. Few ever seek God’s revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ. If men really believed that Jesus Christ was the living revelation of God, then they would study Him and His life, seeking to know Him with every ounce of energy they had. But few ever do, and this failure is a clear indication that they do not believe, not really.

The point is this: since the unbeliever does not believe in Jesus Christ, the One who came to reveal God to the world, then whatever it is that he worships is false—a false god. It is a figment of his imagination, only an idea in his mind. Whether a man bows to an idol or not, he is merely worshipping his own idea, thought, concept, and imagination.

“For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you” (Ac.17:23).

“That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world” (Ep.2:12).

APPLICATION 2:

Every believer needs to remember where he came from before he came to know God. God has been most merciful to us all; therefore, we must never forget that Jesus Christ has purged us from our sins.

“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things [God and His blessings] that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Pe.1:3).

QUESTIONS:

1. What advantages does a believer have over an unbeliever? Do you make the most of these advantages, or do you slip back into the same patterns of your former life?
2. Why do people create gods? In what way is this also a temptation to you?
3. Where is the Christian believer to go in order to know who God really is? Do you make it a regular habit of doing this? Why or why not?

2. LOOK AT YOUR PRESENT LIFE: YOU KNOW GOD AND ARE KNOWN BY GOD (v.9).

You are given the most wonderful privilege of knowing God, or more accurately stated, you are known by God. Think about the glorious privilege of knowing God and being known by God Himself!

As R.A. Cole points out, when a person accepts Jesus Christ as His Savior, he comes to know God personally not just intellectually—but in a much deeper way, for in the Bible “to know” means far more than just intellectual knowledge. It means an intimate relationship; that is why the Bible uses the word *know* to express the most intimate relation between man and wife: “And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived”(Ge.4:1).

However, note a critical point. When a person *turns away and separates himself* from the world to know God, the most wonderful thing happens: God accepts him, becoming a Father to him and knowing him as His son or daughter. The person becomes known by God. This is exactly what Scripture says:

“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Co.6:17-18).

Again, imagine the glorious privilege of such a precious relationship! Not only to know God as Father but to be *known by God* as His son or daughter!

“...I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine” (Is.43:1).

APPLICATION:

Believers should constantly look at their present lives—the glorious salvation God has given them: the privilege of knowing Him and of being known by Him. But note: we must always remember that we do not come to know God by our own efforts or works, not by doing the best we can and obeying the law, as important as all these are. We come to know God through justification, that is, by faith in Jesus Christ and by faith in Him alone.

QUESTIONS:

1. What does it mean to “know God”?
2. What can you do in order to know God better?
3. Who do you know personally who knows God well? What qualities does he have which strike you? How did that person come to have those character traits?

3. CONSIDER YOUR TURNING BACK (vv.9-11).

1. Note a critical point: the Galatians were about to turn back to the elementary things or notions about God. Does this mean they were about to turn back to their pagan, idolatrous worship? No, that

was not what they were about to do. What were they turning back to? The false teachers (Judaizers) in Galatia were teaching that a man was to approach God by the law and works—that a man became acceptable to God by his own efforts, by working and doing as much good as he could.

Of course, this is exactly what all religious people do, no matter their religion: they try to please their god, to secure the god's approval by doing what pleases him. This means that all religions (except Christianity) are religions of works and of law. Therefore, if the Galatians subjected themselves to the law and to a religion of works, they would be *returning* to a life of bondage—the bondage of working to get God to pay attention to them and to receive and accept them.

The crucial point is this: there is no difference between seeking God through the law and seeking God through pagan worship. The foundation of all religious seeking (except Christianity) is the same: that of working to keep the laws that please a person's god—that of doing good so that a person's *god* will accept him.

Note that Paul calls man's elementary notions of God weak and beggarly.

- a. The law and other approaches to God are weak in that they are helpless in saving man. The law itself could only point out man's sin, but it could never justify and make him acceptable to God.
- b. The law and other approaches to God are beggarly, that is, worthless in saving man. The law itself is meaningless, of no use whatsoever in justifying and making man acceptable to God. It is not the law nor man's works and attempts to be good that saves him.

Note also that Paul illustrates his point by referring to special religious holidays. The point is that ritual, ceremony, and the keeping of religious days will not justify and make a person acceptable before God. Christ and Christ alone—faith in Him—saves a person.

2. Note the results of backsliding, of turning back to the world and seeking to please God by self-effort and self-righteousness.

- a. A person becomes enslaved in that he tries to please God by keeping the rules of the law, but he finds he cannot. But he still slavishly tries and tries again. However, it is all to no avail, for the man finds himself still in the bondage of sin and death. He still sins and he still dies, and there is no absolute assurance within of eternal life. And it is the lack of assurance, of knowing that one is acceptable to God, that is so enslaving. The question and doubt of living with God gnaws and gnaws at man—always without the sure knowledge and assurance of God's love. Perfect assurance, confidence, and security come only through faith in Jesus Christ.

- b. A person lives a wasted life. Every approach to God fails except faith in Jesus Christ. Every approach leads to death and condemnation; therefore, every life that approaches God by any other means than faith in Jesus Christ is a wasted life.

“And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Lu.9:62).

“Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him” (He.10:38).

ILLUSTRATION:

What things would cause a Christian believer to backslide? Perhaps some illumination will come through this story.

The boy scout was really excited about going on the annual winter campere. With a couple feet of snow on the ground, the setting was perfect for a great weekend.

His was one of the first troops to hike in and set up camp. The boy scout, along with his troop, forged into the wilderness. Upon arrival, they set up camp and prepared for their weekend adventure.

After pitching his tent, the boy scout realized that he had left something in the bus. So, he proceeded to take the long walk back to the bus which was a few miles away. Feeling confident in his “retriever skills,” he did not take care to look for the important landmarks which would show him the way back to camp.

Coming back from the bus proved to be an unplanned adventure. The confusion from other scouts setting up their own camps caused him to question which paths to take. After awhile, every path looked the same. To say that he was getting worried would be an obvious observation. “How could I have missed it? If only I could find something (or someone) familiar.”

The backslider is a lot like this confused boy scout. They forget to set familiar landmarks in place to keep themselves on track. What are those landmarks? Regular time in God's Word, frequent prayer, and accountable fellowship with other believers.

Whatever happened to that backslidden boy scout you might be wondering? Every approach to his camp ended in failure. Hours later, his scoutmaster found him and brought him back to camp. That is exactly what the Great Scoutmaster, the Good Shepherd, does for wayward sheep. He finds them and brings them to Himself.

QUESTIONS:

1. What insights can you gain from the experiences of this boy scout?
2. What sort of attitude are you to have in regards to backsliding?
3. What are some of the results of backsliding? What have you done to prevent becoming a backslider?

SUMMARY:

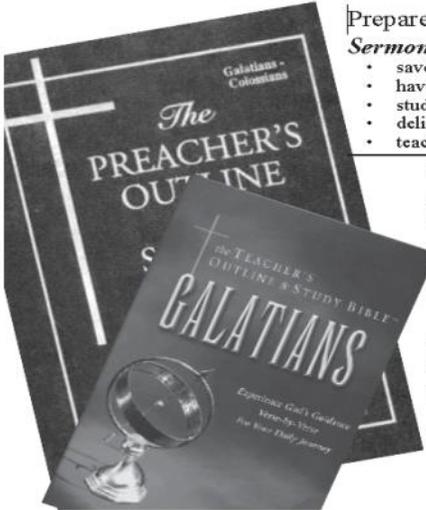
You have come too far to turn back now. Go ahead and take the risk: follow hard after God! As a matter of review, remember the three main points:

1. Remember your former life.
2. Look at your present life: you know God and are known by God.
3. Consider your turning back.

PERSONAL JOURNAL NOTES

(Reflection & Response)

1. The most important thing that I learned from this lesson was:
2. The area that I need to work on the most is:
3. I can apply this lesson to my life by:
4. Closing Statement of Commitment:



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some of the history that I have researched, Jacob left the church he was in because he wanted to shun the ones that left. The elders of that church did not agree with him or believed it to be the right thing to do. That is why there was so much chaos when he started shunning. Jacob was sometimes harsh, stubborn, unreasonable, and self-righteous. For those that are in doubt of what I just shared, please research it yourself. Jesus, however, was kind, compassionate, and loving. Matthew was a hated tax collector, but JESUS accepted him! JESUS ate with the sinners. Yet Jacob Amman believed that it was wrong to eat with the ones that left his group.

So, who do we want to follow? Down through the generations, our parents and grandparents have said that "the world" refers to people who drive cars, use the latest technologies, etc.; yet the Bible says that "the world" is things like pride, hate, lust, and self-righteousness. So, which one do we believe? Who is "worldly"—the one who has a car and loves others, reads the Bible, and follows God, or one who does not have a computer but whose heart is full of lust and hatred and envy?

Does shunning come from love? How could it possibly be? Is this even what the Bible teaches? Have we researched it for ourselves? Is this something JESUS would do? Love is acceptance, forgiveness, and compassion. Shunning is revenge, separation, division, and hurt. Who is our neighbor? Once again, let us ponder our life and how we are treating others. Are we treating others like we would like to be treated, regardless of their past and/or beliefs? Do we love those who are different than we are? How can we fail by being compassionate and loving instead of judging and condemning? My desire is to become the person that treats others as I would like to be treated. Love never fails.

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Offensive Love

—Marvin Hershberger

A Christian should not try to offend others needlessly. However, if we follow Jesus, we will offend others—just as the loving and perfect and holy Jesus often offended others by His life. Following is an article written by Marvin Hershberger who would like to share his thoughts and beliefs. You may feel offended by Marvin's bluntness, but rather than be offended, we all should consider what he writes?

Time is going by so fast, that sometimes we just have to take a moment and enjoy living in the now. Do we ever take the time to think of things like why we do what we do, or take the time to research if what we have been taught is truth? We need to compare what we have been taught to what the Bible says, following the example of the Berean Jews told about in Acts 17. In the Old Testament, GOD sent a prophet to the people and said, "*Repent from the iniquities of your forefathers.*" In other words, he is saying that if your parents and grandparents are not doing what is right in God's sight, turn from their sins and follow God.

We hear a lot about prayer. When we pray, we are speaking, but are we also taking the time to listen to GOD, asking GOD to

open our ears, to hear Him speak, and to come to understand His love and ways. This is very important in a relationship, that when we talk to someone, we also take the time to listen to what he is saying. Psalm 46:10 says, "*Be still and know that I am GOD.*" To repent is to change the way we think. You may ask, "How can that be?" Have you ever thought how much our thoughts control what we do? Proverbs 23:7 says, "*For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.*"

We have been taught that we need to do a certain thing or live a certain way, and we are told and believe that these things are true because others tell us that this is what the Bible says; but have we actually taken time to seek God for ourselves and learn His word? Many people have taken verses here and there, and their opinion of that verse has been passed down many generations. Have we considered and researched for ourselves if this is really truth? We ought to search the Scriptures for ourselves. Jesus even dealt with many religious leaders whom He rebuked for not knowing the Scriptures or for putting their traditions above what God had really said.

For example, have we compared Jacob Amman's life to the life of JESUS? From

With so many modern families affected by divorce, unhealthy marriages and relationships, it is good to look again briefly at the Biblical model of a family. Due to our sinful natures, we still have disagreements and we still get irritated and even angry at times, but our goal ought to be to become more like Jesus every day—leaving the sin behind and becoming a loving, forgiving, happy, healthy, godly family.



Illustrations by Lydia Chorpeneing

Let us look first at the husband/wife relationship. *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church* (Ephesians 5:25-29). *Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them* (Colossians 3:19).

What a great responsibility is given to the husband! The husband is to love his wife as much as Jesus loves His church. How much does Jesus love His church, His bride? Jesus cares for her, nourishes her, loves her, helps her, encourages her, protects her, and certainly would never treat her in a mean way. He is patient, loving, kind, honorable, sacrificial, and wonderful toward His bride. He would never hurt her. He would never ridicule her or speak in a way that would hurt her feelings. In fact, we know that Jesus loved His bride so much that He gave His

own life for her. What a joy it will be for Jesus to present the church, His bride, to His Father. He loves her. He adores her. He is proud of her and is looking forward to presenting her to God. How much then should we love our wives? We should protect help, encourage, love patiently, understand, and adore her—treating her as a queen, boasting of her, thanking God for her, gladly introducing her to others as the wonderful bride given to us as a gift from God!

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord (Colossians 3:18). *Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything* (Ephesians 5:22-24). What an honor it is for the bride of Christ to submit to Jesus! How happy we ought to be to have been chosen by the Savior who loves, protects, nourishes, encourages, and cares for us. What a joy it is to be his bride. This is how it ought to be with husbands and wives. If the husband loved his wife as Christ loved His church, what an honor it would be for the wife to be his. Jesus does not treat us as slaves, and husbands should certainly not treat their wives in such a way.

Often men try to justify their anger, abuse, or neglect of their wives because she is not all that he wants her to be or she does not do all that he expects her to do. (He does this without recognizing his own faults, shortcomings and sins, however). What does the Bible say? Jesus loves us despite our sins and shortcomings. We would not like it if Jesus mocked us or beat us or got angry at us every time we messed up. Husbands, too, ought to love their wives unconditionally, as Jesus loves His bride. May all husbands who treat their wives poorly, hurt them, or ridicule them repent of their sin. May they seek forgiveness from God, their wives, and even their children, and become men of God, following the example of Jesus. How great it

would be for husbands to help their wives do their work at times rather than get angry at the wives for not getting all the work done.



Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:1-4). Certainly children ought to honor and obey their parents. Children ought to respect them and love them. Children should not talk back or rebel against their parents. Again, think of a Christian's relationship with his or her heavenly Father. The more a parent has Christ-like qualities, the easier it is for a child to obey these Scriptures, for the obedience would be out of love rather than out of mere obligation. May parents, especially fathers, never give a reason for their children to turn from God. May parents be godly examples to their children. When a parent loses his temper, it is refreshing and healing to see the parent humble himself and ask forgiveness from the child who was hurt.

Perhaps that is why the Scriptures specifically tell fathers not to provoke their children to wrath, but to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Fathers—are you bringing up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? I do not mean by having strict rules and harsh discipline and language, for that is not how God is with us. Rather, I mean fathers being an example of love and forgiveness and patience, leading the family in knowing and following God. When was the last time

—continued on next page

The Family, cont.

you fathers ever told your wife or your children that you loved them? When was the last time you asked them for forgiveness for your anger or your abuse or your impatience?

It is sad to hear stories of fathers hurting their children. God certainly does not like this either. And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone

were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea (Mark 9:42). God loves children. During His time on earth, Jesus often showed how much He loves children. He warns us against hurting them. How could a father purposefully hurt or abuse his children or wife? How could a brother abuse his sister? Let us turn from our sins. Let us no longer try to hide our evil, but let us confess our sins to God and seek His help and forgiveness. Let us repent from the hurt we have caused others—especially

those in our own families. Let us seek forgiveness from God and from our family members, crying out to God to forgive us and to change our sinful hearts. Jesus taught us of the new birth by which our hearts are made new. Let us cry out to God until we are made new in Jesus and set free from self and sin—not by religion and laws, but by the grace of God, faith in Jesus, and the life-changing power of God's Holy Spirit! Let us be families that demonstrate God's love! —End

God is Our Provider

—Lynn Miller

Times are tough right now, and many of us are learning to distinguish what we really need from what we merely want. Many of us need to wait when we would like to DO something, like buy flowers or clothes. Sometimes we are at the end of the money, but not nearly at the end of the needs. Then one more need occurs to make the situation look even more impossible. Sometimes we become anxious and worried, and our blood pressure rises, and we cry out, "God, what are we going to do?" Or at least we used to. Because God is for us, who can be against us?

We are parents who love our children, and we long to please them. Sometimes we can't give them what they want, and sometimes we know what they want is not best for them. What do we expect of God? He is the perfect Father who loves us beyond what we can ask or think or are remotely capable of ourselves! What ARE we worried about? Do we think we will go hungry? Be humiliated? Die? We might not be quite as comfortable as we would like to be, but all that does is help us to see things as the luxuries they are. Mark and I used to get all up in a tizzy when money got tight, but lately we don't nearly as often. Often we laugh and say, "God, how are you going to handle this one?!" In His timing, He always comes through. In the meantime, we ask Him what He wants to show us, what He wants us to see during this time. God tells us He will supply all our needs according to His riches in Christ Jesus. He does not lack finances! He owns the cattle on a thousand hills! He lacks righteous people, people who BELIEVE!

Let's take some time to decide what we really do believe.

- ◆ WE BELIEVE HE IS GOOD.



- ◆ WE BELIEVE HE IS ABLE.
- ◆ WE BELIEVE HE WILL PROVIDE.
- ◆ WE BELIEVE IN HIM THERE IS NO LACK.
- ◆ WE BELIEVE HE IS A LOVING FATHER.
- ◆ WE BELIEVE WE ARE SAFE IN HIM.
- ◆ WE BELIEVE HE LOVES US FAR ABOVE WHAT WE CAN IMAGINE.
- ◆ WE BELIEVE HE HAS OUR BEST IN-

TESTS IN MIND

- ◆ WE BELIEVE HE KNOWS THE FUTURE AND CAN PROTECT US.

Do we really believe these things about Him? If we do, we have no reason for worry. In fact, worry is the opposite of faith. Worry is, in essence, saying that we don't trust Him to come through, that we don't believe He means what He says. Worry basically says that we think we can do a better job ourselves. How it must break His heart when we don't trust Him.

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for He that cometh to God must believe that He is (exists) and that He rewards those who diligently seek Him. Do you hear that?! God wants us to believe that He is a good "daddy". He rewards those who diligently seek Him! Let's not give up. Believe in Him. He is safe and trustworthy. If you keep seeking you will find. —End



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1 Corinthians 15:12-14: *Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.*

Throughout Christian history, no event stands out as sharply as the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Many in that day could not believe that such an event really took place. In all the funerals you and I have witnessed, death has always been final. Simple reasoning tells us that the resurrection is impossible. But God had a plan. Death would lose its sting, and the grave would lose its victory. The proof is the resurrection of his only son, Jesus Christ. God did this to show us ordinary folks that we could have the same benefit by believing in his son.

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul tells the church how important the resurrection is to believers. Some people said Jesus didn't actually rise bodily from the dead. After all, weren't his teachings the important thing without needing to stretch your belief so far? Even to this day people struggle with the idea of the dead being raised. It defies our experience to believe that those who died long ago could have a new, living body. Therefore, some speculate that it must be only a spiritual resurrection.

Paul says that the most important facts about the gospel are that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and was raised on the third day. He appeared to Peter, the twelve, and then to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time. However, some could not believe that they were actually

seeing a resurrected Jesus Christ. In Mark's gospel, the risen Jesus rebuked the eleven disciples for refusing to believe others who reported seeing a risen Jesus (Mark 16:13-14).



Think for a minute how some even today believe that the disciples were mistaken about seeing a physically resurrected Jesus. Those people might say that the writers of the gospel have perpetrated a myth about the resurrection. That would make the gospel writers all liars. Not just ordinary liars, but worse, because they had lied about God. Could you trust the writings of such a person? Certainly not! The entire teaching of Jesus, including the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 5, would fall! The entire New Testament would be rendered worthless in one stroke!

If the resurrection is not really a bodily resurrection from the dead, then Paul says it would be better to eat, drink, and have a party, because life will soon end. If the resurrection is not real, then we would be better off doing something else on a Sunday morning such as going fishing or playing games of some kind.

In Luke chapter 24, Jesus suddenly appeared to the disciples behind locked doors, startling them. They thought that they

were seeing a ghost. Jesus asked for some food. They gave him a piece of broiled fish, which he ate, reminding them that a ghost cannot do such a thing. What they saw was indeed a body raised from the dead. They were hard to convince, but once they were convinced, they died declaring that these things were true! The language used is the English word "testify." When the writers of the New Testament testified that these things were true, it was not just an ordinary statement; they placed their entire credibility on the line.

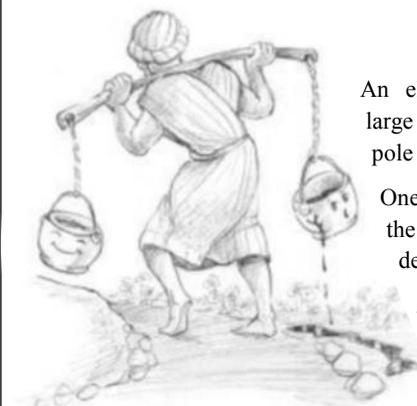
1 Corinthians 15:15 says: *Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.*

If the Bible writers were false witnesses, then all they have written falls flat. There is no use in praying and using the name of Jesus. The teachings all fall, because in one instance the writers have been false witnesses.

The fact that Jesus has overcome death is a great source of comfort for me. He rose not only for his own sake, but to reach out and offer what he had attained to as many as would in return reach out and believe on his name. John 1:12 says; *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.* That gives me confidence that death for me is not final. I pray it will for you, too!

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Cracked Pots



An elderly Chinese woman had two large pots, each hung on the ends of a pole which she carried across her neck.

One of the pots had a crack in it while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water.

At the end of the long walks from the stream to the house, the cracked pot arrived only half full.

For a full two years this went on daily, with the woman bringing home only one and a half pots of water.

Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, but the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it could only do half of what it had been made to do.

After two years of what it perceived to be bitter failure, it spoke to the woman one day by the stream. 'I am ashamed of myself, because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your house.'

The old woman smiled, 'Did you notice that there are flowers on your side of the path, but not on the other pot's side?'

'That's because I have always known about your flaw, so I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back, you water them.'

For two years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate the table. Without you being just the way you are, there would not be this beauty to grace the house.' —End

Starting this month we will study the subject of the “Mark of the Beast”. It will be written in 4 parts: an introduction, which is this issue; part two in which we will study the 7 biblical verses that mention the “Mark” and see what ideas they can provide for us to help us understand this issue; part three in which we will biblically figure out who the “beast” is; and part four in which we will see

what the “Mark of the Beast” is representing. Each step we will take will be important in building our understanding about this subject, so don’t miss one.

However, first I think we need to look at Revelation as a whole, and notice some things about how it was written. The primary theme of Revelation is the war

between God and Satan, not between Israel and the Arab world or between the U.S.A and Russia as some have tried to make it to be. In Revelation, John has pictured some contrasts that help us understand that Satan is trying to deceive the world by mimicking God and what belongs to God. Here is a partial list, to show you what John is trying to get across to us.

GOD

- 1) Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit)
- 2) All power to the Son (Rev. 6:2)
- 3) Has keys of death and grave (1:18)
- 4) Christ’s throne (3:21)
- 5) Worthy is the Lamb (5:12)
- 6) Wrath of the Lamb (6:16)
- 7) A lamb as it had been slain (2:8,5:6)
- 8) He which is, was, and is to come (1:4)
- 9) Tribes of Israel (7:4)
- 10) God’s seal in forehead (7:2-3)
- 11) Armies of heaven (19:14)
- 12) Supper of the Lamb (19:9)
- 13) Lamb’s bride--God's church (21:9-10)
- 14) Apostles of the Lamb (21:14)
- 15) New Jerusalem (21:2)
- 16) Christ is Lamb with 7 horns (5:6)
- 17) Jesus=Saviour (22:16)
- 18) Leads the kings from the east (16:12)
- 19) Nations saved (21:24-26)

SATAN

- 1) False trinity (dragon, false prophet, and beast (Rev. 16:13)
- 2) Power to the beast (Rev. 13:2)
- 3) Keys to the bottomless pit (9:1)
- 4) Throne of Satan (2:3, 6:10)
- 5) Who is like the beast? (13:4)
- 6) Wrath of Satan (12:12)
- 7) One head as it were wounded to death (13:3, 14)
- 8) Beast was, is not, and is to come (17:8)
- 9) Tribes of the earth (1:7)
- 10) Beast's mark in forehead, hand (13:16-17)
- 11) Armies of earth (the beast's) (19:19)
- 12) Supper of the birds to eat the wicked (19:17-20)
- 13) Harlot of Babylon--fallen church (17:1, 5)
- 14) False apostle (2:2, 19:20)
- 15) City of Babylon (14:8, 16:19)
- 16) False prophet has 2 lamb-like horns (13:11)
- 17) Apollyon = destroyer (9:11) (SATAN)
- 18) Leads kings of the earth (16:14)
- 19) Nations destroyed (16:19, 20:8)

Another short list shows us further themes in Revelation:

GENESIS

- 1) lost tree of life (3:22)
- 2) death (2:17, 3:13)
- 3) earn our own bread (3:19)
- 4) lost dominion (3:24)
- 5) naked (3:7)
- 6) driven from God (3:23)

REVELATION

- 1) gain tree of life (2:7)
- 2) victory over death (2:11)
- 3) eat hidden manna from God (2:17)
- 4) dominion restored (2:26)
- 5) clothed in white glory (3:5)
- 6) no longer separated (3:12)

In Matthew 24, the disciples asked Christ what would be the signs of His coming and the end of the world. Before giving ANY specific answers, He said, “Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come IN MY NAME . . . and shall deceive many.” In other words, deception will come from within Christianity! Revelation 13:13-14 says the same thing; “And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men; and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the

means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by the sword, and did live.”

The apostle Paul agreed in II Thess. 2:2-3, where he said that the Second Coming will not occur until there is an ‘apostacy’(falling away) in the church, and the Man of Sin will be revealed, who goes against God by trying to be, and act, like God in His church

(temple,v.4) In verse 10, there is that word again; “deceivableness”! People (almost the whole world-Rev. 13:2) will be deceived into thinking they are following God, when in essence they are following Satan!

With these thoughts in mind, we will start next issue with a study of the 7 texts in Revelation that mention the ‘Mark of the Beast’. Please follow closely the coming issues. It is of utmost importance, to keep us from being deceived. —End

To know just how much the Lord loves us, we need to take a look at what love really is. Quickly: what is the opposite of love? Like nearly everyone else, you probably said, “Hate is the opposite of love.” Actually, according to 1 John 4:18 fear is what we have when we don’t have love. ...but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

“Really? Fear?” you say. Think about it. Because God is love, if we don’t have Him, what do we have? Are we filled with anger, or are we filled with fear, which results in expressions of anger, hatred, and rebellion?

So why is fear the opposite of love? Actually, the natural man has a lot to be afraid of. But the man that has God -also has love. If God is love, then if we have God, we also have love. How can we fear anything, either in this life, or in the one to come, when we have God and his love? And if we don’t have Him, how can we have anything except fear? With God, we have fear of other people, fear of hell, and fear of God. Because this fearful person is alive, among men, and has this life to deal with, he somehow needs to function. We as people tend to give to others what we have ourselves, whether it is fear or love.

Have you ever seen a group of youngsters fight an animal? They hit or throw things at the otherwise perfectly tame animal. The animal, if it can’t get away, will respond by doing what? It will growl, hiss, snaps its teeth, and respond by trying to scare its tormenters more than the animal itself is scared.

A wife, for instance, might try to control her husband, because she is afraid (fear) of what her husband is going to do if she isn’t in control. She likely displays anger and intimidation, either openly or via offensive words, in order to get her husband to do what she thinks is right.

You see in these examples that fear results in outward actions that can lead to even worse things. Fear leads to many things, but never love. Fear, if not dealt with, results in incredible destruction.

We have a powerful God. *Even the demons tremble in fear. ...the devils also believe, and tremble* (James 2:19). What do we have to lose by turning to Him, and his love? We

have nothing to lose, except fear itself. He takes us as we are, fearful, angry, and rebellious, because of His love. We can do nothing except go to him as we are; we have nothing in ourselves to offer. Through Christ, he restores us and fills us with true love.



Illustration by Lydia Chorpening

God asks us to love those who mistreat us. Why? Well, isn’t that exactly what he did for us? We mistreated Him terribly. Even though we may not have directly cursed him, who among us hasn’t cursed God by rejecting His Son? *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema* [cursed,] *Maranatha* [for the righteous judge is coming] (1 Corinthians 16:22). Who among us hasn’t been angry with God, perhaps even swearing in His name? None of us were born guiltless; none of us have not first rejected the Lord. We all need to accept the righteous atonement of the Lamb.

Let me ask you: how hard is it to love your enemy? “Well,” you may say, “I haven’t ever sought revenge on my enemies. I always walk away without saying anything back to them.” “Ok,” I reply, “that is fine. But, Jesus asks us to do more.” In fact, he says, *Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the*

publicans the same? (Matthew 5:42-46).

Wow. Isn’t that something? Because we ask, He gives us what we ask for, even though we were His enemies. That is awesome and frightening at the same time. That is a lot of love. Here are a few verses to think about:

For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life (Romans 5:10).

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? (Matthew 7:7-10).

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me (Revelation 3:20).

So, my friend, it is very clear that while we have been enemies of God, He is standing and knocking at the door wanting to be let in! His love is so great, that He sets aside all we did against Him, in order to love us. We know how amazing this is, as we were yet sinners when he made the first step by knocking. We know how hard it is to love

our enemies, to really love them. It’s very hard to bless them as God blessed us, extending the good news to them of salvation through Jesus Christ’s perfect atonement, once and for all. In looking at how hard it is for us to love our enemies, we get a little glimpse of how much God loves us. His love is tremendous.

My friend, if you hear the knocking, let Him in. It isn’t easy from an earthly perspective. In fact, we will be asked to suffer for His sake. However, when persecuted, we are given an opportunity to love as He loved us. To be given an opportunity to love our enemies as He loved us is a blessing we will never understand until we’ve been there ourselves.

With this verse I leave you: *Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen* (Ephesians 6:24). —End

Lena hummed Louisa Stead’s meaningful hymn as she smoothed the warming soil over the lettuce seeds she’d sown. “Well, what makes you so happy this morning?” Sadie had just come to help her daughter plant their garden.

“Oh, it could be different things. Did you notice how warm the sun feels and how good it is to be out in the fresh spring air?” Lena’s answer wasn’t the real reason for her happiness. “I heard you had someone bring you home from the singing last night,” Sadie persisted.

“Yes, it was Johnny Beachy. We had a lovely evening.”

“Isn’t this the third Sunday night in a row that he’s brought you home?”

“Yah zis, (yes, it is)” Lena replied

“Didn’t I hear that Johnny and preacher John were spending some time with Bible studies?”

“Yah,” Lena smiled radiantly. “Johnny was telling me that they had been studying Ephesians chapter one. That is what we read last night.”

Sadie was thoughtful before she answered. “I am so thankful that God is giving you the opportunity to be with a young man who is interested in the things of God. I wish I would have been blessed in that way at your age. Learning the Scriptures wasn’t encouraged when I was growing up.”

“Reading Ephesians One with Johnny last night made me happy. It was refreshing to be with someone who could carry on a meaningful conversation. Do you realize how many promises are in that chapter?”

Lena resumed humming her tune. Realizing that she was “*blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ,*” made her feel closer to God. That chapter also said she was chosen of God from the very foundation of the world. Why not feel happy?

“Vell, I will admit, mother, there are some big words there that I don’t understand, like predestinated, redemption and riches of His grace, but they all seem to hold some weighty promises that I want to understand.”

“As long as you study the Word of God we won’t have to be concerned that you will turn out like Elroy’s Emma did.” Sadie continued. “If she had just seen all that Jesus did on the cross for her, she probably wouldn’t have snuck away during the night and gotten herself in such a mess. Though she was with a group of ex-Amish she missed her family and came back all messed up.

“Ich vayz, (I know),” Lena replied. “I don’t know why Emma left like she did. I just want to know more about God’s Word. I want to learn what ‘redemption’ and all the other big words mean and how they relate to me.

“Some of those words are hard to understand, but I think I have heard it explained that redemption means to buy back. It has to do with Jesus’ death on the cross.”

“Mother, we are planting good seed here, aren’t we?” “Why, yes,” Sadie answered. “It’s the same seed that always yields prize-winning produce.”

“That’s just it. In Genesis I read that God made everything to produce fruit after its own kind. Can’t I believe that if I read God’s holy Word that it will help me produce godly fruit? I will surely learn the meaning of these

words.”

“There are still so many things to learn, but you are right. Scripture is truth and truth produces more truth.” Sadie replied

“Mother, I love you and I love being here in the garden planting seed in hopes of a good harvest. I do think that as I study God’s Word I will better understand Scriptures like Ephesians 2: 8 and 9. These verses say that I’m saved by God’s grace and not by my own works. I’d like to believe that understanding these concepts would yield a spiritual harvest.”

As if in deep thought Sadie covered the peas she had just sown into her neat, straight rows.

“It was refreshing for me to be with a young man who could speak about concepts and values. Somewhere I heard that little people talk about people. The average people talk about weather, but it takes a big person to talk about concepts and values.”

“You have a point there,” Sadie chuckled. “I’ll pray that we will both understand God’s Word and become more like Him as we do.”

Lena resumed humming Louisa’s hymn,

“Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him!

How I’ve proved Him o’er and o’er!

Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus!

O for grace to trust Him more!”

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Shell Lake, WI 54871
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1

PREVIOUS!

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Tune in for previous and upcoming discussions—see page 11 for details

Forgive One Another

— Orva Hochstetler

Are we drifting along through this life kinda half way asleep,
And all the sins we are committing never cause us to weep?
We feel no need of forgiveness and the forgiving of other too,
But when we come before our Creator then what will we do?

If we have days that seem like we're living our life in vain.
It may be because we are suffering from self- inflicted pain.
Our modern doctors have no cure for this type of disease,
But there is another place to go to put our minds at ease.

We may be holding onto grudges in spite of our intention,
And feel some resentment towards the one who dares mention,
It's always our own sins that are the hardest for us to see,
And we must kindly forgive one another if we want victory.

We can put up a front by pretending we're doing just fine,
And give everything we have down to our very last dime,
But if we don't forgive others there will be a huge loss,
Our feeble minds are not able to comprehend the cost.

Everything in this world is worth less than our own soul,
And salvation of it needs to be our number one goal.
We can live ever so peacefully and not cause any strife,
But if we aren't forgiving one another we'll miss eternal life.

If Heaven is our goal then the best place for us to start,
Is to have a good honest look at the inside of our heart,
There may be some things there without us even knowing it,
Because they're covered up so well we aren't really showing it.

We need to get on our knees and say an earnest prayer,
Then open God's Word and search for what is in there.
It will teach us the secret we must learn to truly live,
By knowing when to put "for" in front of the word "give."

When Jesus taught us to pray in his sermon on the mount,
He wanted to make clear the one thing that really counts,
If we fail to forgive others for things they do or say,
Then God will have to deal with us in the same way.

As Jesus was suffering for us on the cross at Calvary,
He showed us one last time how to treat our enemy,
"Father forgive them for they know not what they do."
What a beautiful example He left for me and for you.

If people throw rocks at us we don't have to get even,
We can turn to our Bible and see the stoning of Stephen,
He just looked up to Heaven and saw Jesus standing there,
"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge," was His final prayer.

Oh how terrible it would be on that great judgment day,
If our heavenly Father would then have to turn us away,
The one important thing in life we had failed to do,
Was the forgiving of one another like God wants us to.

We don't know how long until it'll be our time to die,
Or how soon Jesus will come with His angels in the sky,
So let us all forgive one another while we are still well,
It is the one thing we must do or we'll end up in Hell.