

Lesson 10: Living for Christ

- I. As we close out this lesson series, let's pause to review what we have accomplished
 - A. We have seen that an eternal, all-present, all-knowing, all-powerful Spirit Being called God willed into existence the space, matter and energy making up our physical universe and in so doing He established the beginning of time
 - B. Distinct from all other living creatures, God created humankind in His own image granting us an eternal spirit in addition to a physical body of flesh and blood
 - C. By God's design, You Are Special and you must never forget that
 - D. In the beginning, the first couple were created to be holy and pure conforming to the same goodness and character of God
 1. They were intended to live in perfect harmony and fellowship with their Creator
 2. However, when Adam and Eve chose to disobey God's commands, they missed the mark and sinned creating a spiritual barrier separating them from a Holy and just God
 - E. That same tendency to reject God and disobey His commands has produced a Sin Problem for all of us today
 1. Being guilty of breaking God's laws, we too have severed our relationship with Him
 2. Left in that state, we risk eternal separation from God in Hell when our life ends
 3. This is the Problem of Sin
 - F. Because God loves us, He does not want anyone to remain in that dismal state
 1. However, the response of a Holy God is limited
 2. Because He is just, righteous and Holy, He cannot have fellowship with lawbreakers nor can He unconditionally forgive our sin
 3. The only way out is through Jesus, the Son of God, who was born as flesh and blood to live a perfect life, revealing God's will for humankind and ultimately offering Himself as a substitute taking the punishment for our sins
 4. Jesus is God's solution to the Problem of Sin, and there is none other
 - G. By God's Plan of Salvation, we have a way to claim the sacrifice of Jesus as the payment for our sins
 1. By His gift to us, our debt can be paid; we can be redeemed and brought back to full fellowship with God
 2. Being restored to holiness, we have the promise of eternal life in Heaven with Him when our physical existence ends
 - H. Although salvation is a gift to us, we still must claim it
 1. God does not force Himself on anyone
 2. To embrace the gift of salvation, we must
 - a. Believe in Jesus as the Son of God who died for our sins and was resurrected in a victory over death
 - b. Repent, changing our heart to pursue righteousness and live a Holy life
 - c. Confess our faith in Jesus as the Son of God, our Savior
 - d. And be baptized by immersion in water for the forgiveness of our sins
 - I. After baptism, we become true disciples of Jesus Christ free from the bonds of sin
 - J. In this our final lesson, we are going to talk about what happens after baptism

- II. When believers are baptized for the forgiveness of sins, they are added to the Lord's Church
 - A. That word Church comes from a translation of a Greek word meaning "the called out"
 - 1. The association of the Church with the called out is entirely appropriate since Jesus said "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32)
 - 2. We are, therefore, being called out of sin into the Kingdom of God
 - 3. This, in fact, formed the basis for the early ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus as they called for all to "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand".
 - B. Acts 2:41 tells us how people gained entry into the Church, "So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls."
 - C. By whom and to what were these baptized believers added?
 - 1. Acts 2:47 tells us ". . . And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved."
 - a. Baptized believers were added to the number of those who were being saved, i.e., having their sins forgiven
 - b. Also note, it was the Lord Himself who added them to the number being saved
 - c. Our salvation does not depend upon the approval of any religious group of men and women;
 - d. That control belongs exclusively to Jesus, and admission is granted when we submit to God's Plan for our Salvation
 - 2. The fact that the Church is populated by those being saved is clear from Paul's instruction to the Ephesians: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless." (Eph 5:25-27)
 - a. Here Paul is teaching husbands to love their wives as Christ loves the Church
 - b. Notice what Paul said Christ did for the Church
 - 1) Jesus gave Himself up for the Church to sanctify the body
 - 2) Furthermore, that body was cleansed by the washing of water - a reference to baptism
 - 3) And what resulted was a group of people who were sanctified, holy and blameless - they were free from sin
 - 4) The members of the Church are those who have been saved
 - D. The Church also is called the body of Christ, and Jesus is the sole head of that body
 - 1. Speaking of Jesus, Paul said: "And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." (Eph 1:22-23)
 - 2. Col 1:18 says "He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything."

3. It is clear from these two passages that the body of Christ is the Church
 - a. It is His body because He purchased it with His own blood sacrifice (1 Pet 1:18-19)
 - b. Since the body belongs to Jesus, He is the head of the Church
 - 1) That means all spiritual authority rests with Jesus
 - 2) Church doctrine, discipleship and worship practices are defined by Jesus
 - 3) We must learn God's expectations by studying the Bible
 - 4) Men, women, councils or other earthly organizations are not the head of the body
- E. The Bible refers to the members of the Church by different names
 1. In Acts 11:26, they were called Christians first at Antioch
 2. They also frequently are called saints (Acts 9:13; 26:10; Rom 1:6-7; II Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1)
 - a. That means all Christians are saints
 - b. The Biblical use of this word does not make any distinction among the saved members of the body of Christ
 - c. We know this because the Apostle Paul defined the meaning of a saint in the opening words of I Corinthians: "Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours:" (I Cor 1:1-2)
 - 1) Paul addresses this letter to the Church at Corinth and then defines who these people are
 - 2) They are those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling
 - 3) Paul says saints are Christians who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, i.e., made Holy by being cleansed of their sins
 - 4) That sanctification occurred in their baptism
 - 5) Hence, Biblically, saints are the sanctified members of the Church of Christ
- III. It is also important to realize, by God's design, there is only one Church - not many
 - A. When the Bible speaks of Churches in the plural sense, it is not referring to different factions but rather different congregations that are part of the same universal body of saved believers who happen to assemble in different locations
 1. Paul and the brethren with him wrote the book of Galatians "to the Churches of Galatia" (Gal 1:2)
 2. Similarly in II Cor 8:1, Paul wrote: "Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia,"
 3. Rom 16:16 reads: "Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you."
 - B. In Ephesians chapter 4, Paul admonished the Ephesian Christians to walk in a manner worthy of their calling "being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all

who is over all and through all and in all." (Eph 4:3-6)

1. This passage may provide the clearest picture of Christian unity in all the Bible
2. Paul commands these Christians to be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit
 - a. He then goes on to list what Christians are to unite around
 - b. First on that list is the concept of "One Body" or "One Church"
 - c. Also mentioned are one faith, one baptism and one God and Father who is over all
- C. When Jesus poured out His heart in the prayer of John chapter 17, He was well aware of the coming threats of division through the Apostasy and falling away from the Word of truth;
 1. Jesus acknowledged that He had taught His Apostles the Words from the Father and that they had believed and accepted them (John 17:6-8)
 2. He went on to ask the Father to "keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one, even as We are" (vs 11) - emphasizing the need for unity
 3. Jesus then called for their sanctification in the truth of the Word (vs 17)
 4. That prayer was expanded to include us today who believe through the words of the Apostles teaching as Jesus said: "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word" (vs 20)
 5. Again Jesus prayed "that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me." (vs 21)
 - a. Here we see the importance of unity
 - b. Jesus said unity is needed so the world may believe You sent me
 - c. Our unity is what provides credibility to the Gospel message in the eyes of a lost world
 - d. When we depart from the unity of the Word and go our different ways, by our conflicting actions and words we are testifying to the world that
 - 1) Either God's revelation is not binding on humankind and we can modify it as we see fit
 - 2) Or God's message has been corrupted and lost
 - e. Such needless confusion undermines our ability to save lost souls, especially on the mission field where innocents are confronted by different religious names, doctrines, worship practices and plans of salvation
 6. In verse 22, Jesus says the glory He received from the Father was passed to His Apostles "that they may be one, just as We are one"
 7. In verse 23, Jesus pleaded for unity a fourth time saying: "I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me."
 8. As Jesus faced His death on the cross, His most urgent petition to the Father was for the Apostles and all who believe through their Words to be united just as the Father and Son are one.
 9. A quick view of the religious world today reveals that is not the case

- D. There are many so called "Christian" Churches divided by name, founder, origin, organization, doctrine, sources of authority, traditions, worship practices, membership, works and even plans of salvation
1. These differences have produced the Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, Protestant denominations and many factions and cults, all professing to be followers of Christ and yet deviating from the one Church described in the books of the New Testament
 2. How can this be when the Bible directly reveals God's plea for Christian unity?
 3. The Apostle Paul provided some insight in his warning to the Ephesian elders
 - a. "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them."
(Acts 20:28-30)
 - b. When through arrogance, people seek to build a following by exercising their own authority in place of the God's will, the outcome is apostasy and division
- E. So how can Christians achieve and maintain unity?
1. It is by accepting the Bible as the sole source for all spiritual authority
 2. And adhering to the inspired teachings and examples provided for our guidance and learning
 3. Peter expressed it this way: "Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."
(I Pet 4:11)
 - a. We must speak and act based on the authority of God, not men
 - 1) That authority comes only from the inspired Words of the Bible
 - 2) Where it is transmitted to us by commands, inspired examples or sound/necessary inferences
 - b. Moreover, all that we do must glorify God through Jesus Christ
 4. Unity cannot exist until all humankind are willing to submit themselves to God's pattern and design for the Lord's Church
 - a. Just because we think our way is acceptable, does not make it so: " 'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,' declares the LORD. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.' " (Isa 55:8-9)
 - b. We are incapable of going it alone: "I know, O LORD, that a man's way is not in himself, Nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps." (Jer 10:23)
 - c. When we act based on our own conscience, we risk disaster; Prov 16:25 says: "There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death"
 5. Our obligation as a Christian is to be a part of the one true Church described in the pages of the New Testament

F. Jesus Himself warned us not to follow the masses seeking an alternate way to eternal life: "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matt 7:13-14)

IV. Being a Christian and member of Christ's Church does not mean we will never sin

A. Christians, after all, are human and still struggle with temptations and poor decisions

1. Just like an infant, new converts especially must grow spiritually and learn how to live as a disciple of Christ
2. Try as we may, all will miss the mark and fall short of the glory of God from time to time (Rom 3:23)
3. The Apostle John went so far as to say: "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us." (I John 1:8)

B. So given the certainty of sinning, what is a Christian to do? Is baptism required all over again?

1. The answer is No
2. John tells why, "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;" (I John 2:1)
3. In I Tim 2:5, Paul reminds Christians: "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,"
4. Christians have a personal advocate and mediator to God the Father
 - a. As a result, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (I John 1:9)
 - b. That assurance is available only if we continue as a faithful follower of Jesus
 - c. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." (I John 1:6-7)
 - d. Christians who live for God and walk in His light are assured forgiveness by the cleansing blood of Jesus when they repent and confess their sins to Him

C. Notice it is still possible for a Christian to fall away and be lost for eternity

1. That comes from rejecting God to walk in darkness and pursue worldly lusts
2. John said as much in the passage just read: "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth" (I John 1:6)
 - a. A Christian cannot claim to have fellowship with God while they are walking in darkness
 - b. That is a lie - contrary to the truth
 - c. If we no longer have fellowship with God, that separation leads to death
3. John cautioned against being seduced by worldly things saying: "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

- The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever." (I John 2:15-17)
- a. Here John emphasized the one who does the will of the Father lives forever
 - b. One who chooses lusts is part of a world that is passing away
4. Peter said that if a Christian returns to the defilements of the world, the latter state is worse than never having become a Christian: "For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT," and, "A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire." (II Pet 2:20-22)
5. "For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame. For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned. " (Heb 6:4-8)
- a. For a Christian to return to a life of sin is the same as trampling under foot the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross
 - b. Verses 7 and 8 make an analogy contrasting the ground that bears useful vegetation with ground that yields only thorns and thistles
 - 1) The fertile ground represents faithful Christians that prosper
 - 2) The ground producing thorns and thistles is worthless and ends up being burned and destroyed
 - c. So it is with a life that has fallen away into darkness
 - d. Jesus referenced something similar in the parable of the sower (Luke 8:5-14)
 - 1) The seed that fell on the rocky soil, grew up and withered away representing those who fell away in time of temptation
 - 2) The seed falling in thorns grew up and was choked out describing those who were choked with worries, riches and pleasures of life bearing no fruit
6. Even the Apostle Paul had to work to control his body and keep from losing the prize of salvation and being disqualified: "Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified." (I Cor 9:25-27)
7. Also notice the words of Paul in I Cor 15:1-2, "Now I make known to you,

brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain."

- a. The gospel message is able to save, if you hold fast the word
- b. That means embrace it, accept it and live it
- c. Those that do not are said to have believed in vain, i.e., without the benefit of salvation

8. In Rev 2:10, John wrote to the Church in Ephesus saying: "Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."

- a. The crown of life was to be awarded to those who were faithful until death
- b. We are expected to live a life walking in the light to the end

D. The point of all of this is to say having our sins forgiven and becoming a Christian is not the end of the journey

1. It is merely the beginning of a new life of Holiness
2. A life that is intended to glorify God and bring others to salvation through Jesus

V. Our ability to live as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ depends on knowing what it means to live as a Christian and having the strength and commitment to do so

A. That is an important part of the spiritual growth that is to follow salvation

B. Recall the words of Jesus in Matt 28:19-20: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

1. Jesus commanded His Apostles to make disciples by baptizing them and then teaching them to observe all that He had commanded them
2. Christians must be taught the whole Truth revealed by God
3. This includes not just how to be saved but also how to live for Christ and walk in the light
4. That is the task of a lifetime

C. For us today that knowledge comes from the Bible: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."
(II Tim 3:16-17)

D. We are expected to feed on the Word of God to, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." (II Tim 2:15)

E. The Hebrew writer pointed out the expectations and advantages of spiritual growth and maturity: "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and

evil." (Heb 5:12-14)

1. We are expected to grow in our knowledge of God to be equipped to teach others
2. By putting that knowledge to work in our lives, we train our senses to discern between good and evil
3. That spiritual maturity enables us to lead a faithful Christian life overcoming the temptations of the world

VI. God has shown us the path to a better life

- A. It is one that brings hope, love and joy, and it is freely available to all
- B. "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." (Titus 2:11-14)

VII. We now end this study with the words of Jesus taken from Matt 7:24-27, "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell — and great was its fall."

- A. If you have not claimed the gift of eternal life by becoming a Christian what better time than now.
- B. Please don't delay
- C. "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?" (Mark 8:36)
- D. "He who has ears, let him hear." (Matt 13:9)