

THE MYSTERY

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?



A Bible Study

By Joyce Anderson

"Christ in you, the hope of glory"
(Colossians 1:27)

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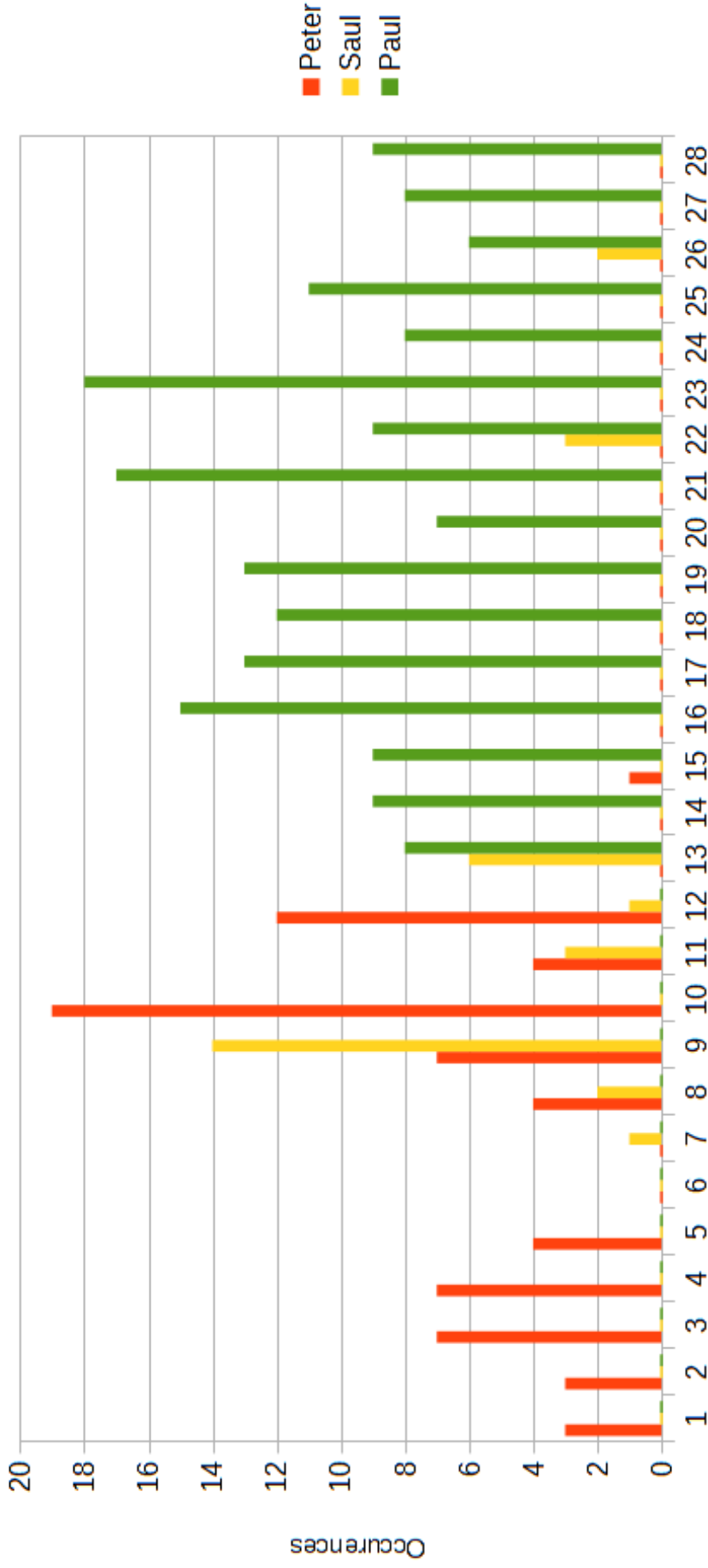
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Peter, Saul and Paul in Acts



Chapter of Acts

This chart demonstrates a transition in the book of Acts. The beginning of Acts follows Apostle Peter who had been given the keys to Israel's earthly kingdom.

After Stephen's condemnation of Israel in Acts 7, a transition begins with a Jewish convert named Saul to whom the dispensation of grace for the Gentiles was revealed by Jesus. In Acts 13, Saul's Jewish name was changed to the

Gentile "Paul" when he took his place as the apostle to the Gentiles.

- Ben Anderson

Introduction

The pastor of a large church stood at the pulpit introducing a new series of messages to hundreds in his congregation, “We just finished a series from the Gospels and today we’ll start a new series from the Apostle Paul. I know many of the things we are going to see will contradict what we just learned. The only explanation I can offer is that God never intended for us to understand the Bible.”

The apparent contradictions in the Bible are confusing to many people. However, we know the Bible is without error. How can we reconcile what seems to be two opposing realities?

Before we can find harmony in the Bible we must first acknowledge that the Word of God is flawless. Next, we must realize that God intends for us to understand the Bible. God created speech so he could speak to us and we to him and one to another. His words are meant to be studied, understood and obeyed.

When the Word of God is understood literally and dispensationally the Scriptures fit together without inconsistencies or contradictions. God says what he means and means what he says. “We don’t use distortion, or deception...setting forth truth plainly” (2 Cor. 4:2). Dispensationally God dispensed his laws, rules, commandments and principles in different ways at different times. From creation and the fall of Adam until Jesus paid for the sins of the world, through the time we are in now until the end of the age, there are different “house rules.”

Because of God’s desire for a relationship with mankind, he created Adam and Eve perfectly and in his own image and they lived in *innocence*, not knowing they were naked. God permitted them to do anything they wanted; his only commandment was to not eat fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (conscience). After man sinned God continued to desire a relationship with mankind and allowed people to be guided by their *conscience*. “The Lord said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it’” (Genesis 4:6-7).

There are two-thousand years between Genesis 1 to the end of Genesis 11, which covered two dispensations: **Innocence** and **Conscience**. After the fall of Adam and before God sent Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden he promised, through Eve’s offspring, a redeemer who would reconcile God and man by crushing the head of Satan. In the first two millennia after creation the world became exceedingly wicked. How would God keep his promise to provide a redeemer through Eve’s offspring?

In **Genesis 12** we see God finds a way to fulfill his promise by choosing Abraham, because through his offspring the Savior would be born. He needed a people that would be the bridge between what was promised in the Garden of Eden and fulfilled on Mount Calvary.

For the next two thousand years, from Abraham to Apostle Paul, people lived under the dispensation of **Israel** or **Law**. God gave Abraham's offspring the law of Moses as a schoolmaster and, "The law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith" (**Galatians 3:24**). God blessed Abraham in order for him to be a blessing to all nations because his offspring (Israel) would bring the promised redeemer, "He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed'" (**Acts 3:25**). During this period God promised Israel that he would establish a **Kingdom**.

Israel did not obey God by leading people to Him. So, God has temporarily set aside his promises to Israel for a kingdom on earth. After the stoning of Stephen, God raised up Apostle Paul to bring a dispensation of **Grace** to the Body of Christ. After the Rapture, God will resume his promise to Israel and bring the kingdom to earth.

In each dispensation God dealt differently with people; however, in every dispensation God's purpose is the same which is to draw people to himself and bring them into a right relationship with him. God loves the entire world and "wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (**1 Timothy 2:4**).

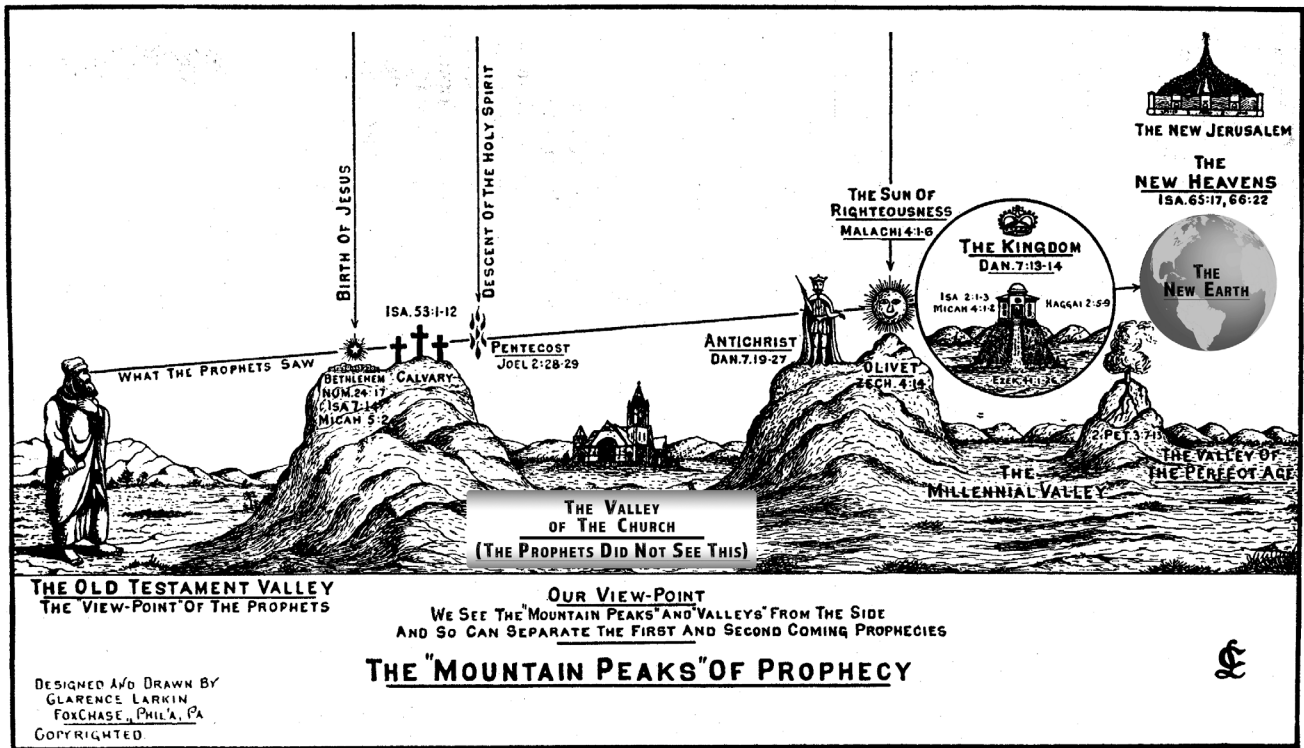
Apostle Paul is our apostle in this dispensation of grace which began sometime after Paul's Damascus road encounter with the risen Savior and has continued for nearly 2000 years—and will continue until the Rapture when the Body of Christ will be caught up to be with the Lord Jesus Christ forever. The *Peter, Paul and Saul in Acts* chart at the beginning of this Introduction shows how Apostle Peter was the central figure in the beginning of Acts, but declines and disappears after mid-Acts where Apostle Paul becomes the central figure.

Paul's message for the Body of Christ is referred to as "The Mystery" because it was hidden from the prophets so they never prophesied about it. The prophets looked forward to the promised Messiah, the Cross and beyond to the promised kingdom. Peter and the apostles expected the immediate return of Christ to establish his kingdom in Israel. According to the following diagram by Clarence Larkin, where does the grace message fit into the Bible?

The "Valley of the Church" in the following illustration was not seen by the prophets and the twelve apostles because God chose to keep it a secret. Paul explains the mystery in **Ephesians 3:2–5**:

Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets.

This Bible study does not delve into the doctrinal framework of the dispensation of grace but instead focuses on what a person's life looks like within this period of grace. Apostle Paul is our guide and in this Bible study his message to us is shown by a "mind map."



Mind Map

A mind map is a visual representation of information that includes a central theme surrounded by connected branches of related topics. These topics are visualized with images, words and colors. This visual tool helps organize information to better analyze, comprehend, synthesize, recall and generate new ideas.

The core concept for this Bible study is The Mystery taught by Apostle Paul and is placed in the center of the Mystery Mind Map on page 7. The five associated topics begin on the top right side of the page moving clockwise, with each topic represented by a different color and picture. The related topics stemming from the central idea are: Requirements, Resources, Responsibilities, Restrictions, and Rewards.

Another dimension of this map shows the interconnection of the race a person immediately begins after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and ends at the finish line when a person dies physically or is caught up to be with him forever. This interconnection unifies all the truths and principles that only belong to the dispensation of grace.

The Mystery

The mystery “which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (**Colossians 1:27**) is a biblical term and one which Apostle Paul emphasizes, “Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past,

but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him” (**Romans 16:26**).

Why would God keep important truths a secret from others? Does God reveal new things at different times throughout human history? Read what the Bible says:

Isaiah 48:6 – You have heard these things; look at them all. Will you not admit them? “From now on I will tell you of new things, of hidden things unknown to you. They are created now and not long ago; you have not heard of them before today. So you cannot say, ‘Yes, I knew them.’”

Ephesians 1:9 – And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

Colossians 1:25–26 – I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints.

This Bible study began as a mind map that I made to organize and visualize the main points the Apostle Paul writes about in his 13 books to the Church in this dispensation of grace. After much Bible study, reflection and conversations with people I was encouraged to add notes and explain the mind map. Paul’s message to the Body of Christ is life-changing. As we understand God’s loving plan for the members of his body, we will have a new perspective on who Christ Jesus is to us and who we are to him. Because this Bible study is by no means complete on The Mystery, you are encouraged to use these five lessons as a springboard for your personal Bible Study as you search the Scriptures and apply them to your life.

My prayer is that as you study the Bible using the mind map with its central theme and five related topics, you will understand and follow the teaching and instructions of Apostle Paul in his New Testament books, Romans to Philemon. He poured out his life to present the mystery revealed to him by God. It is of utmost importance for us to study what it means to have “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” By studying Paul’s gospel we will know the answer to the question, “What difference does the mystery make?”

TOGETHER WITH THE LORD FOREVER I TH 4:16

YOU ARE MY HOPE, JOY and CROWN

PH 4:1 and I TH 2:19

EVERLASTING I CO 9: 25

Paul

REWARDS
2 CO 6:10
ROM 14:10

FINISH

I CO 3:10-15

I HAVE GIVEN MY LIFE FOR THIS COL 1:25-27

Apostle Paul

What is the Mystery?

CHRIST in YOU the HOPE of GLORY

COL 1:27

RESTRICTIONS
NO OTHER DOCTRINE I TH 4:16

LOVE
OBEY
WORK
FEAR
PRAY
REPRESENT
TEACH
FAITHFUL
THANKFUL

HOLD OUT THE GOSPEL of LIFE PHIL 2:16

A WAY THAT SEEMS RIGHT - LEADS TO DEATH
SELF SPIRIT of ANTICHRIST

RESPONSIBILITIES



RESOURCES
2 TIM 3:16 HOLY SPIRIT ALL SCRIPTURE IS PROFITABLE BODY of CHRIST PRAYER
ARMOR of GOD THOUGHTS EQUIPPED COMPLETE

REDEEM THE TIME EPH 5:16

GIVE YOURSELF FULLY TO THE WORK OF THE LORD I CO 15:58

BEFORE SALVATION FAITH+NOTHING EPH 2:8-9

OLD MAN

ACTS 16:31

NEW CREATION

YOU ARE IN A RACE I CO 9:24-27

AFTER SALVATION FAITH+WORK EPH 2:10

Only

REQUIREMENTS
JESUS WAY TRUTH LIFE JOHN 14:6

CHRIST LOVE COMP PELS US

REDEEM THE TIME EPH 5:16

THE TIME



This page left blank if you wish to remove the Mystery Mind Map on the reverse from the booklet.

Lesson 1: Requirements

“Christ in you, the hope of glory”
(Colossians 1:27)

The gregarious missionary looked up at me from his teacup as he slurped his *chai* and with a grin said, “You know I used to be just like you when I first became a missionary. I went around telling people they must put their faith in Jesus Christ to be saved. Now, I know better. I’m just here to love the people.” Surprised by his declaration, I questioned, “But, George, you’ve shared your testimony of receiving Jesus Christ as your personal Savior!” He responded, “Well, yes, that was *my* way. But, there are many ways to God and every person must find *his own way*.”

In other dispensations God gave different requirements for demonstrating faith. But, faith has always been necessary for salvation as Hebrews states, “Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who come to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him” (**Hebrews 11:6**). However, the Apostle Paul speaks of a mystery, “*Christ in you, the hope of glory*,” and in this dispensation of grace he never wavers from the one requirement for obtaining the hope of glory, and that is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

QUESTION

Is simply believing in Jesus Christ all that is required for salvation? Or, is there another way to be saved?

Introduction

There are two kinds of people in this world: those who have Christ in them and the hope of glory, and those who are without Christ and without hope. In fact, all people have an eternal soul that will be somewhere forever. Our physical body will pass away, like a vapor, and yet people typically spend their lives focused on their physical bodies while ignoring the condition of their everlasting soul.

The Bible says, “For all have sinned and fall short of God’s glory” (**Romans 3:23**). Death is eternal separation from God and is the result of sin. Faith in Jesus Christ is the only requirement for participation in glory. Through the ages the Bible tells of various ways in which God tested man to see if he had faith. However, before Christ, obedience to God was rewarded based on the *future work* on the cross; and, after Christ, obedience is rewarded because of the *finished work* of Jesus Christ at Calvary.

In this dispensation of grace, before we are saved, salvation comes by ***faith plus nothing***. We cannot do anything to save ourselves. It is a free gift, not of works (**Ephesians 2:8–9**). There is no other requirement for “*Christ in you, the hope of glory*.”

At the time of salvation, each new follower of Christ experiences the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and enters a race in which he competes until the Day of Christ Jesus. After we are saved, our new life in Christ requires ***faith plus works***. Upon entering glory, the believer will be judged for everything he has done in the flesh—both good and bad. May every believer be in the race to win it!

You are going to learn

- ▶ God loves all people and desires everyone to be saved.
- ▶ Faith is in a person, not just in facts about that person.
- ▶ If you are not 100% sure you are going to Heaven, then you are going to Hell.
- ▶ Without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit a person is lost.
- ▶ A person can be sure they are eternally secure.
- ▶ Apostle Paul says all believers in Christ Jesus are in a race and it is not optional.

God loves all people and desires everyone to be saved.

Since Creation, God has always desired a people of His own who will love him as their only God. Man was created in God’s image, lived in a perfect garden, honored with purposeful work, and enjoyed a personal relationship with the Creator. Man was given a free will to choose whether or not to obey God.

When Adam and Eve chose to disobey God by eating of the forbidden fruit, fellowship between God and mankind was broken, causing sin and death enter the world.

In **Genesis 3:15**, the Lord God told the serpent:

And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will crush your head,
and you will strike his heel.

God could have immediately and justifiably put the first man and woman to death. Instead, he promises a Savior through the offspring of the woman. The Savior Jesus Christ will crush the head of Satan and defeat death. And, hence his “rescue mission” begins. “The Bible is not the basis of missions: missions is the basis of the Bible,” said Ralph Winter, former director of the U.S. Center for World Mission. In every dispensation, God’s desire and purpose has been to restore fallen man back to himself.

The deliverance of lost mankind is the central point of the Bible. Because God has always desired all people to be saved, he focused on Abraham because God needed a people who would follow him in order to fulfill his promise of a Savior through the seed of woman. After **Genesis 1–11**, which spans 2,000 years of striving with sin-wrecked people, Abraham finds favor with God. In **Genesis 12** God chooses Abraham and his seed through Isaac as the ones into which the Messiah was to be born.

As we consider that the majority of the Bible seems to be directed toward Abraham's offspring, we may surmise that God was far more interested in Israel than anyone else. However, when looking closely at God's plan, we begin to understand the heart of God. He loves everyone and was determined to fulfill his promise in Eden for a Redeemer for all mankind. Johannes Verkuyl explains:

God's election of Abraham and Israel concerns the whole world. He deals so intensely with Israel precisely because He is maintaining His personal claim on the whole world. To speak to this world in the fullness of time, He needed a people.

In fact, Abraham's family was charged with carrying on the vision of God's desire to bless all families of the earth. **Genesis 12:3b**: "*All peoples on earth* will be blessed through you."

God's use of obedient people to bring the world back to himself is evident from Old Testament characters: Abraham, David, Solomon, and Isaiah.

- God's promise with Abraham was about salvation of mankind: (**Genesis 12:3**; cf. **18:18**; **22:18**).
- The Book of Psalms points often to God's love for the nations: "Declare his glory *among the nations*" (**1 Chronicles 16:24**; cf. **Psalms 96:3**). "That your ways may be known on earth, your salvation *among all nations*" (**Psalms 67:2**).
- The Temple built by Solomon was to be a worship center for all peoples and not just for those born as Hebrews. His Temple dedication prayer was "That *all the peoples of the earth* may know that the LORD is God and that there is no other" (**1 Kings 8:60**).
- Israel's prophet, Isaiah, declares that God's people were to bring salvation to the ends of the earth: "I will also make you a *light for the Gentiles*, that you may bring my salvation to *the ends of the earth*" (**Isaiah 49:6** cf. **chapters 9** and **42**).

The centerpiece of God's plan through the ages is the salvation and restoration of mankind to himself.

(For more information about this section, see, *Discovering Missions*, by Charles Gailey and Howard Culbertson.)

Faith is in a person, not just in facts about that person.

Often we are encouraged to believe certain facts about Jesus Christ as our means of salvation. However, the Lord Jesus Christ is a personal Savior who desires a relationship with each individual.

Our faith is in a person, not merely facts about that person. Even Satan believes the facts about Jesus as emphasized in **James 2:19**, **Luke 4:34** and **Matthew 8:29**.

Jesus told the disciples, “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life” (**John 5:39–40**).

Jesus is God incarnate—fully God and fully man (**Colossians 1:15–20**).

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Jesus Christ is the redeemer that God promised to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (**Genesis 3:15**).

Jesus is the one and only answer to our sin problem. “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved” (**Acts 4:12**).

Sin separated mankind from God. “You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die” (**Genesis 2:17**).

The penalty for sin is physical and spiritual death. God’s gift of eternal life comes through Jesus Christ (**Romans 3:23**; **Romans 6:23**).

Jesus Christ himself said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (**John 14:6**).

Knowing *whom* we believe is even more important than what we believe. “That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know **whom** I have believed, and am convinced that **he** is able to guard what I have entrusted to **him** until that day” (**2 Timothy 1:12**).

Our salvation does not come from believing facts about Jesus Christ but trusting in Jesus Christ himself. Our faith is in a person. Trust in Him; know Him; love Him; obey Him; have faith in Him; do greater things through Him (**John 14:12**).

If you are not 100% sure you are going to Heaven, you are going to Hell.

Although this is a provocative statement, it is true. Being sure of one’s salvation is serious. We do not want to go to Hell: “He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of

our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord” (2 **Thessalonians 1:8 & 9a**).

The Bible says, “*Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved*” (**Acts 16:31**). Confidence in one’s salvation is not based on personal works or merit; instead, confidence is based on the complete and finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. A person who lacks faith in one’s salvation does not trust in Jesus Christ’s finished work.

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross (**Colossians 2:13–14**).

Belief in Jesus Christ makes us God’s child. “But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father.’ So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir” (**Galatians 4:4–7**). We understand physically that we will always be the offspring of our biological parents. Likewise, spiritually we are the offspring of our spiritual Father. There is nothing we will do that will change this.

Salvation means we are in God’s family. Nothing can separate us from the love of God (**Romans 8:38–39**).

When we are **born again** (**John 3:6–7**) we can be sure of our salvation. Memorize this riddle:

Born once
Die twice;
Born twice
Die once.

If a person has put their faith in Jesus, they must be 100% sure they are saved. Do not hesitate to trust him now. Today is the day of salvation.

Without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, a person is lost.

When a person hears the gospel of salvation and believes in Christ Jesus the Holy Spirit enters his life and is sealed as a guarantee until the day the believer is redeemed (**Ephesians 1:13–14**). It is only in the dispensation of grace that the Holy Spirit does not come and go.

You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ (**Romans 8:9**).

A person can be sure they are eternally secure.

Because the Holy Spirit does not come and go from our life, we can be secure in our eternal salvation. The assurance of salvation is one of the wonderful distinctions of this dispensation of grace. Eternal security gives the believer the confidence they need to do the work for which they have been called (**2 Timothy 2:15**).

Often people refuse to believe in eternal security because of deep concern that if a person believes they cannot lose their salvation, they will have freedom to sin without consequences. Thus, some reason they must help God with the disobedient by adding a stronger punishment of losing one's salvation. Do not focus on stripping someone of their salvation. The Bible warns us not to judge others before the proper time. God will be the judge (**1 Corinthians 4:5**).

After salvation we are changed from the old man (**Romans 6:6**) to a new creation (**2 Corinthians 5:17**). We have been saved to do the will of God. We focus on redeeming the time and holding out the gospel to those who are lost, and we encourage our weaker brother and sister to stand firm in the Lord.

The story of safety measures for the builders of the Golden Gate Bridge is a clear example of how much more effectively a person works when he is not afraid of losing his life. Based on the size of the project, it was estimated that 35 workers would fall to their death during the building of Golden Gate Bridge. However, because a safety net was installed, workers did not have the fear of falling to their death and were able to work faster and more efficiently. We can also have confidence in our Christian life that we will not lose our salvation when we fail.

<https://www.industriallogic.com/blog/golden-gate-safety/>

Apostle Paul says all believers in Jesus Christ are in a race and it is not optional.

At the time of salvation, the new believer in Christ experiences the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and enters a race in which he competes until the Day of Christ Jesus. Upon entering glory the believer will be judged for everything he has done in the flesh—both good and bad. May all who put their faith in Christ be in the race to win it. Thus, after salvation, our new life in Christ requires *faith plus works*.

The race that Apostle Paul speaks of has real impact on how we are to live our new life in Christ. The race metaphor lets us know we must compete for the prize. This prize is not salvation, but it is a reward of great value for all of eternity. Disregarding this race will result in God's co-workers receiving God's grace in vain. "*As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain*" (**2 Corinthians 6:1**).

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize?
Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore, I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I

do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize **(1 Corinthians 9:24–27)**.

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus **(Philippians 3:12-14)**.

Other Scripture to consider:

Colossians 3:1–4: According to these verses, what are some sure indications that we have been raised with Christ?

Does this passage give you confidence of your salvation?

Colossians 2:18: How does this verse state we can be disqualified from the race?

2 Timothy 2:5: What must we do to compete in the race?

2 Timothy 4:7–8: If we want to finish the race well, how do we accomplish this?

Sum Up

Yes, simply believing in Jesus Christ is all that is required for salvation. What a tremendous provision God has made for mankind. Eternal life is the hope and destiny of all who put their trust in Jesus Christ. Christ Jesus completed the work of salvation through his death, burial and resurrection. Now, each person is invited to accept this gift and become a part of the Body of Christ so that we will be with him forever.

Because of God's gift through Jesus Christ every believer is given a work to do in this life. May each member of the Body of Christ present the gospel to a lost and dying world so that together we can say, "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

The more a person testifies of Jesus Christ with others, the more effective one becomes at holding out the gospel to those without hope. Writing your personal testimony is an important step in being prepared to be a witness. Read, "How to Share your Testimony" found in the Additional Resource section. Then write your testimony and share it with someone this week.

Lesson 2: Resources

“Christ in you, the hope of glory”
(Colossians 1:27)

The Bible speaker leaned his body over the podium and with an exaggerated gesture pointed his finger at the Christian audience and bellowed, “You can’t do anything to please God!”

Telling Christians they cannot do anything for God nor can they possibly please him has become a popular meme for many pastors, teachers and authors. Perhaps these people are confusing salvation with our walk. Whatever the reason, this teaching is unbiblical and leads to an unproductive life. We cannot do anything to save ourselves but once we are saved we work. Let’s see what the Bible has to say about our walk and the resources we receive at the moment of salvation.

QUESTION

If those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ cannot do anything for God and are unable to please him, then, “Why are believers given so many resources at the time of salvation?”

Introduction

What a wonderful time to be saved! Apostle Paul tells us in **Ephesians 2:12** that as Gentiles we were separate from God and excluded from citizenship in Israel. However, through the blood of Christ we are brought near. “Christ in you, the hope of glory,” is life-giving. Paul is so eager to tell the Body of Christ how blessed they are with resources that spring from the life of Christ and make us worthy and useful for God’s goals and glory.

From the moment a person receives Jesus Christ as Savior they are immediately blessed with many resources enabling each member of the Body of Christ to run the race and accomplish God’s will.

You are going to learn

- ▶ Through the Holy Spirit each member of the Body of Christ is blessed with every spiritual blessing.
- ▶ The Bible is our authority, instructor and guide.
- ▶ We accomplish God’s objectives through the Body of Christ.
- ▶ Prayer is an essential resource for every believer.
- ▶ Wonderful resources are given only to the Body of Christ.

Through the Holy Spirit each member of the Body of Christ is blessed with every spiritual blessing.

1. “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ” (**Ephesians 1:3**).

2. In this time from Apostle Paul’s instruction to the Church until the Rapture, the Holy Spirit indwells each member of the Body of Christ.

“And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory” (**Ephesians 1:13–14**).

3. Living by the Spirit of God will produce much fruit.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other” (**Galatians 5:22–26**).

4. The Holy Spirit gives power to our words and message. Campus Crusade for Christ (CRU) appropriately defines witnessing: “Sharing the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to him.” Apostle Paul writes to the Thessalonians that his message was powerful because of the Holy Spirit: “Because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction” (**1 Thessalonians 1:5**).

The Bible is our authority, instructor and guide.

1. We have the complete and perfect Word of God. The Bible is our authority. The Holy Spirit will never contradict the Word.

“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you” (**John 16:13–14**).

2. The Bible will provide everything needed to equip each member of the Body to do good work. “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (**2 Timothy 3:16–17**).

3. An easy acronym B-I-B-L-E (**B**asic **I**nstructions **B**efore **L**eaving **E**arth) highlights how much we need the Bible to guide us through this life until That Day.

We accomplish God's objectives through the Body of Christ.

Jesus Christ is the head of the Body. We are interdependent. Just as a head needs a body, a body needs a head. "And, he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy" (**Colossians 1:18**); "... in regards to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church" (**Colossians 1:24**).

Through the Body of Christ, God achieves his purpose to bring all people to himself.

In this dispensation of grace there is unity and diversity in the Body of Christ:

12 Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14 Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

15 Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. 19 If they were all one part, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" 22 On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, 24 while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, 25 so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it (**1 Corinthians 12:12–27**).

Prayer is an essential resource for every believer.

Read the following verses and write how prayer helps us to live according to God's will.

Ephesians 6:12 _____

Colossians 1:9–14 _____

1 Timothy 2:1–2 _____

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 _____

Wonderful resources that are only given to the Body of Christ.

Apostle Paul informs the Body of Christ of wonderful resources that are only given to them: complete in him, thoroughly equipped and encouraged to put on the full armor of God.

Do we have all the resources we need to run the race and accomplish God’s will in our lives? If so, why? Explain using the following Scripture.

Colossians 2:10 _____

2 Timothy 3:16–17 _____

Ephesians 2:10 _____

Ephesians 6:10–17 _____

Sum Up

Those who put their faith in God are blessed with every spiritual blessing; however, it is possible to live a spiritually impoverished life. This is similar to a farming family in Texas who lived in a small shack on worthless barren land. After their deaths, oil was discovered on their property. While suffering in desperate need, unable to help themselves or others, the family never realized they were living on top of oil worth millions of dollars.

Do not live as though you are poverty-stricken; instead, use your resources to bring others to the Lord and to build up the Church. We are, “Blessed to be a blessing!” How wonderful to be lavished with so many blessings because we are loved by our Savior. God has blessed the Body of Christ and given each member the responsibility to bless others.

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness (**Colossians 2:6**).

*Look at the Gospel Hand on page 45 in Additional Resources and memorize the points and verses for each finger. Share your Gospel Hand with someone this week.

**Spend some time considering the spiritual blessings you have through Jesus Christ. List some of the things you feel particularly thankful for and how you hope to use them to bless someone this week. Share your plan with a partner and pray together for a fruitful time.

Lesson 3: Responsibilities

“Christ in you, the hope of glory”

(Colossians 1:27)

At a family gathering a woman started a conversation with her brother-in-law, “I noticed that you are really involved with your business and your leisure, but I never see you spend any of your time, energy or money on doing anything for the Lord. What’s up with that?” The man answered with swagger, “Hey, I accepted Jesus and that’s my ticket to Heaven when I die. In the meantime I’m gonna enjoy my life to the fullest.”

Every person who has Jesus Christ living in them has been blessed with assurance of the hope of glory. With such tremendous privilege, each believer has responsibilities as members of the Body of Christ.

QUESTION

If we are saved by grace through faith plus nothing, then why do Christians have responsibilities?

Introduction

Since the creation of mankind and in every dispensation, God uses people to accomplish his will. In this dispensation of grace God has purposed each member of the Body of Christ to do his will. Because Christ Jesus is the head of the Body, we are interdependent. God needs us, we need him and we need each other to carry out his goals (**1 Corinthians 11:3, 12:12–13, 27; Ephesians 1:22–23**).

God gives everyone free will to choose Jesus Christ. After salvation, each person is given freedom to live for Christ. If an unbeliever chooses not to put their faith in Jesus, they will suffer eternal consequences.

However, if a believer chooses not to live for Jesus Christ, they will lose their inheritance, although not their salvation. This distinction between a saint’s eternal security and his conditional inheritance is the difference between the **state** and **standing** of every believer.

When a person accepts Jesus Christ as personal Savior, Satan has failed to keep you for himself. There is absolutely nothing that Satan, the deceiver, can do to keep you out of Heaven. However, he can lie to you and trick you into believing that there is nothing you are supposed to do once you are saved. If Satan can prevent you from doing the will of God, then he can keep the remainder of the lost to himself. You and I are to tell people to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. We are to proclaim the wonderful news of our blessed Redeemer. We are ambassadors for Christ. There

is no “Plan B.” If you do not share the gospel, there will be people who will not hear and cannot believe.

For, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’”
(Romans 10:13–15).

“We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” **(Ephesians 2:10).**

You’re going to learn

- ▶ Our state and our standing relate to our identity and responsibilities in Christ.
- ▶ Apostle Paul teaches that every Christian has responsibilities to God and each other.
- ▶ In this dispensation of grace a believer in Christ Jesus must work to please God.
- ▶ Members of the Body of Christ have responsibilities.

Our state and standing relate to our identity and responsibilities in Christ.

Our *state and standing* are sometimes referred to as our *position and practice*. As a believer in Christ, our state or position never changes and is what gives us our identity in Christ. Our identity determines our responsibilities.

Our State (Position):	Our Standing (Practice):
“Christ in you”	Agents of Hope
Created in Christ Jesus for good works	Live this life to do good works
Accepted in the Beloved	Love God and others
Blessed with all spiritual blessings	Blessed to be a blessing
Holy Spirit is our deposit	Live confidently with our Heavenly hope.
New Creation	Throwing off the old man
“Saved, Sealed and Sanctified”	Doing God’s will because of our salvation
Members of His Body	Working together to accomplish God’s will
The Church	Communicating our identity with others
His Ambassadors	Magnifying and making God’s name famous

Apostle Paul teaches that every Christian has responsibilities to God and each other.

We are to love God:

Apostle Paul shares heartfelt prayers asking that believers grow in their love for Christ through knowing him, obeying him, proclaiming him, and never being ashamed of him.

An amazing dialogue in John 21 between Jesus and Peter reminds us that love always gives. The resurrected Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved him. And, three times Peter tells Jesus that he loves him. But, love is not an adjective describing a feeling. Love is an action verb. Love always does something. Jesus tells Peter that if he loves him, he will feed and take care of his sheep.

In the Body of Christ members must live for God and others. Firstly, we love God because he first loved us. Secondly, we love and care for the Church, the Body of Christ (**Galatians 6:10**). Thirdly, we must hold out the gospel to the lost both near and far away (**Acts 13:47, Acts 17:6b**).

We are to love and build up the Body of Christ:

God is love and, because we are his dearly loved children, we are to love one another even as he has loved us (**Ephesians 4:32**). This love extends to all people, but Apostle Paul makes a point to encourage our love for the Body of Christ (**Galatians 6:10; 1 Corinthians 8:9–13; 10:23; 12:24b–26; 14:1–3**).

We are to proclaim the gospel to the world:

Because Apostle Paul wrote repeatedly about global mission, the Body of Christ knows God's desire is for all people to be saved. Read the following passages:

(**1 Timothy 2:3–4**) "This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."

Romans begins and ends with a call to all nations:

(**Romans 1:5**) "Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles."

(**Romans 15:20**) "It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation."

(**Romans 16:25–26**) "Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him—"

In this dispensation of grace a believer in Christ Jesus must work to please God.

God created mankind for work, before sin entered the world (**Genesis 2:15**). In this dispensation of grace, Apostle Paul never once mentions that Christians are to rest. However, there are numerous references to work. God purposefully designed man to accomplish and achieve while remaining in a loving relationship.

An overwhelming theme of Paul is that before salvation we are saved by “faith plus nothing.” After salvation, a person lives by “faith plus work, work, work!”

Apostle Paul emphasizes that God created the members of the Body of Christ from salvation to work (**Ephesians 2:10; Philippians 2:12–13; Titus 3:8**). He is so insistent on informing the believers of their responsibilities because he does not want them to miss out on their great reward.

Members of the Body of Christ have responsibilities.

Look at the following list of key words representing our responsibilities and, using a Bible Concordance, find Scripture for each of these and record the references.

Love _____

Know _____

Obey _____

Proclaim _____

Unashamed _____

Thankful _____

A well-known verse that emphasizes that we are workmen is **2 Timothy 2:15** (KJV):

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

A workman:

- Studies
- Does his best to present himself to God as one approved
- Does not need to be ashamed
- Rightly divides the word of truth

Galatians 6:7–11 advises us that we will reap what we sow. It is important that we do not sow sparingly. Matthew Henry Commentary states:

Our present time is seed time; in the other world we shall reap as we sow now. As there are two sorts of sowing, one to the flesh, and the other to the Spirit, so will the reckoning be hereafter.

Read and meditate on the following Scripture from **Colossians 1:3–29**. What does Apostle Paul say about a person’s responsibilities in the Body of Christ?

Thanksgiving and Prayer

3 We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, 4 because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people— 5 the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel 6 that has come to you. In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace. 7 You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, 8 and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

9 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, 10 so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, 11 being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, 12 and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. 13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

The Supremacy of the Son of God

15 The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. 19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. 22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— 23 if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

Paul's Labor for the Church

24 Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. 25 I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— 26 the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people. 27 To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

28 He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. 29 To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

Sum Up

As members of the Body of Christ we are deeply loved and accepted by God and given assurance of life everlasting with Him. We are blessed to be a blessing! We are to love and bless others with the life-saving message of the gospel, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

****List all the people you know who need to hear the gospel. Choose two or three and pray together with a partner for these people. See “Suggestions for Praying for the Lost” on page 54 in Additional Resources.**

God’s Word is clear that we have responsibilities and we are to please him. Study the following verses for further insight into what God expects from us. Choose a passage that speaks to your heart and memorize it. Next week be ready to share with the group your memory verse or verses and what they mean to you.

Galatians 1:10, 6:8 _____

Ephesians 5:10 _____

Philippians 2:12–16 _____

Colossians 1:9–12 _____

Colossians 3:23–24 _____

Romans 12:1–2 _____

1 Corinthians 10:31 _____

2 Corinthians 5:9–10

1 Thessalonians 2:4, 4:1

2 Timothy 2:4

Matthew Henry Commentary on Paul’s exhortation to the Galatians (**Galatians 6:7–11**) challenges those who know the Lord to work for him in this life.

6:6–11 Many excuse themselves from the work of religion, though they may make a show, and profess it. They may impose upon others, yet they deceive themselves if they think to impose upon God, who knows their hearts as well as actions; and as he cannot be deceived, so he will not be mocked. *Our present time is seed time; in the other world we shall reap as we sow now. As there are two sorts of sowing, one to the flesh, and the other to the Spirit, so will the reckoning be hereafter* [emphasis added]. Those who live a carnal, sensual life, must expect no other fruit from such a course than misery and ruin. But those who, under the guidance and influences of the Holy Spirit, live a life of faith in Christ, and abound in Christian graces, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. We are all very apt to tire in duty, particularly in doing good. This we should carefully watch and guard against. Only to perseverance in well-doing is the reward promised. Here is an exhortation to all to do good in their places. We should take care to do good in our life-time, and make this the business of our lives. Especially when fresh occasions offer, and as far as our power reaches.

Write down what these two sentences mean to you

“Our present time is seed time; in the other world we shall reap what we sow now.”

“As there are two sorts of sowing, one for the flesh and the other to the Spirit, so will the reckoning be hereafter.”

Lesson 4: Restrictions

“Christ in you, the hope of glory”
(Colossians 1:27)

The visitor sat in my dining room while we discussed the Bible from a dispensational perspective and suddenly her eyes filled with tears as she asked, “Are you seriously telling me that the Gospels are not for us when I gain so many blessings from reading them?”

QUESTION

Are restrictions a part of the believer’s life when the Body of Christ has enjoyed freedom for the past 2000 years?

Introduction

Restrictions or rules may seem unlikely for anyone living during this period of grace where we do nothing to save ourselves but only to put our trust in what Jesus Christ has done for us on the cross of Calvary. However, “Christ in you, the hope of glory” compels us to be in a race that will last the rest of our earthly lives. In this race, Apostle Paul makes clear we are to press on to win the prize—not for salvation but for our inheritance. This race is not yet won and Paul desires that every believer remains qualified to compete.

“If anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor’s crown unless he competes according to the rules” (**2 Timothy 2:5**).

“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it, But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (**Philippians 3:12-14**).

When considered from a biblical perspective, restrictions permit us to think properly, stay focused on the goal, and enable us to be fruitful and resourceful people. Restrictions and rules are meant for us to make progress in the race and to be multiplying ourselves. Adhering to restrictions will allow us to be found as good and faithful servants.

You are going to learn

- ▶ Why are restrictions and rules important?
- ▶ Restrictions inform us of the correct rules to follow.

- ▶ Restrictions guide us in what to be doing during our earthly life.
- ▶ Restrictions advance us in who we are.

Why are restrictions and rules important?

As followers of Christ Jesus, we are in a race. Some want to return to the Garden of Eden or create heaven on earth but we have a heavenly hope. We focus on the goal ahead, making progress along the way. Our goal is not a place but it is a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our life and heart's desire. We will be with him forever in perfect union.

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words (**1 Thessalonians 4:16–18**).

To move forward and make progress we fight the good fight, finish the course (race), and successfully cross the finish line. Let us not grow weary!

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith
(**2 Timothy 4:7**).

Restrictions are important because God makes the rules and gives restrictions in order to keep us on the course so that we will finish well. We must know and obey the rules so that we can be a good and faithful servant (knowing, doing, being).

During this time when we are no longer under the law but under grace, we must be particularly discerning about restrictions (rules). When we disobey and dishonor God, he waits until the judgment. He does not judge like he did with the Flood, the Tower of Babel, or the Ark of the Covenant. If anyone stirred God's displeasure with building a tower to God, they soon enough discovered their mistake. But, what was wrong with doing what was right in one's own eyes, or building something that would reach God, or protecting the box that contained God's Glory? It was man's attempt to do things in their own way without obedience and reverence to God. They set themselves up as gods. Beware of all that seems so good and spiritual today. Study the Scriptures to discern what pleases and honors God and what displeases and dishonors Him.

Apostle Paul warns us that restrictions keep us on track toward our eternal goal. A Christian nurse learned this while working in an alcoholic rehabilitation unit at her hospital. She became troubled while observing that alcoholics following the 12 Steps in the Alcoholics Anonymous program had the power to remain sober and live productive lives. They were not Christians but were overcoming a powerful addiction on their own without necessarily acknowledging God or the Bible. She believed a person could only overcome addiction through the power of the Holy Spirit after becoming a new creation.

The nurse brought her confusion to a Christian brother. He explained that all truth comes from God. Anyone who follows God's truth will benefit in this life. However, only those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ are saved and will spend eternity in heaven.

There are many good principles and general truths in this world which enhance one's life. But, if we trust in these things to improve ourselves and yet are not born again, we will be eternally separated from God. Do not be deceived by any teaching that makes life better now but leads to hell. Confidence and faith in self instead of in Jesus Christ disqualifies us from the race and from leading others to the saving life of Christ.

For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved (**2 Thessalonians 2:7-10**).

Restrictions inform us of the correct rules to follow.

Without knowing the correct rules and restrictions we will be disqualified from the race. Accurate knowledge is life-giving and life-changing and will enable us to stay on course. Let us be extremely careful in abiding by the rules God has given through Apostle Paul. We do not pick and choose.

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel*—which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert** the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!*** As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted,**** let him be eternally condemned!

Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.

I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ (**Galatians 1:6-12**).

The asterisks in the Scriptures above correspond with the reference verses below.

* But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough (**2 Corinthians 11:3-4**).

** This is what the LORD Almighty says:

'Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord.'

They keep saying to those who despise me, 'The Lord says: You will have peace.'
And to all who follow the stubbornness of their hearts they say, 'No harm will come to you.'

But which of them has stood in the council of the Lord to see or hear his word?
(Jeremiah 23:16–18).

But you must not mention 'the oracle of the LORD' again, because every man's own word becomes his oracle and so you distort the words of the living God, the LORD Almighty, our God **(Jeremiah 23:36).**

*** For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel **(Romans 9:3).**

**** I urge you therefore brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them **(Romans 16:17).**

Restrictions guide us in what to do during our earthly life.

Being guided by the correct teaching and rejecting what God has not intended for the Body of Christ is essential in living productive lives. Apostle Paul gives Timothy instructions on how to live and how to teach others and tells him to diligently and wholly give himself to these matters if he wants to see progress. Based upon Scripture, watch your life and doctrine closely! **1 Timothy 4:15–16** says:

Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

From the Scripture we know that all the Bible is profitable for us. We learn so much from the Old Testament and the Gospels along with books written during other dispensations. However, only the books Apostle Paul wrote are to the Body of Christ. This is a restriction that we must adhere to.

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed **(Galatians 1:8–9).**

As the time draws closer to the Rapture, adhering to Apostle Paul's instructions to the Body of Christ is more imperative than ever before. We must study the Scripture carefully, "For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths" **(2 Timothy 4:3–4, ESV).**

All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And, if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained **(Philippians 3:15–16).**

Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to this more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ ... **(1 Thessalonians 4:1–12).**

Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. (**Ephesians 5:1–2**).

Restrictions advance us by affirming who we are in Christ

Who you are will determine what is true and how you are to respond. The most basic truth of our identity is our position before God. We are Children of Light; we are Christ's ambassadors; we are the temple of the Holy Spirit; we are a new creation; we point everyone to Christ; we are redeemed; we are reconciled; we are restored; we are regenerated; we are complete; we lack nothing; we are in Christ; Christ is in us.

Based on who you are in Christ, how will you live your life?

Sum Up

Restrictions are a part of the believer's life because although the Body of Christ has enjoyed freedom for the past 2000 years we have become slaves and debtors to the Lord Jesus Christ.

For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness (**Romans 6:14–18**).

Being deceived and not living up to the truth that we have received from God's Word will disqualify us from the race because we will retreat from all that God has called us to do. If I believe that God is condemning me and hurling obstacles in my path to strip away all that he has promised for my benefit, then I will have no understanding of who God is, what he has done for me and how he expects me to live. Instead, I will defend myself and retreat from him and others while waiting for him to take me home.

Who is God? Who is Jesus? How does the Holy Spirit work? Do we really understand and know the Godhead? Apostle Paul was constantly praying that we would know Jesus more and more. Without a proper understanding of who Jesus is, what he means to us and what he has purposed us to do then we will have lived our blessed life in vain (**2 Corinthians 6:1**).

Consider Apostle Paul's doctrine, what we are supposed to do with this teaching and who we are in Christ.

What difference does it make?

“Christ in you, the hope of glory” is the life-altering truth of Apostle Paul’s doctrine for the Body of Christ. Being led by the Holy Spirit is the core of the Christian life. Our identity comes from what we know to be true and what we do with truth.

In Additional Resources memorize The Romans Road on page 53 and be prepared to share these five verses from Romans that can lead someone to the Lord.

Lesson 5: Rewards

“Christ in you, the hope of glory”
(Colossians 1:27)

The Bible teacher smiled as I asked him what Apostle Paul says about rewards. “Oh I don’t concern myself with such things. My only reward will be to spend eternity with my Savior.”

Such a spiritual sounding statement but is this a spiritual response for a member of the Body of Christ?

A wonderful truth Apostle Paul teaches is that each individual saved into the Body of Christ will not suffer the wrath of God which is coming in the Tribulation. Whether alive or dead at the time, every member will be caught up to be with the Lord Jesus Christ forever. Therefore our hope of glory is a heavenly life with Christ, not an earthly one (**Colossians 3:1–4**).

Our heavenly hope begins with the *Bema* seat judgment. Everyone at this judgment will have entered eternal glory which will no longer be a hope of a future event but a present reality. The rewards are not for salvation. Each person will be rewarded for the things they have done while in the body through faith in the Son of God.

QUESTION

Why should I care about rewards if I am going to be with Jesus forever?

Introduction

Free will does not end at salvation but continues on after a person is saved. Thus, rewards will acknowledge those who chose by faith to use their resources to glorify God by fulfilling their responsibilities. One of the significant proofs that the Body of Christ has been given work to accomplish is the promise that there will be rewards for things that each member has done during their lifetime. Rewards should be desired by every believer. Seek to understand what Apostle Paul says about rewards.

You are going to learn

- ▶ Why rewards should be important to each Christian.
- ▶ What Apostle Paul says about rewards.
- ▶ What should be done if your motives are wrong?

Why rewards should be important to each Christian.

Rewards are biblical and it is God who gives them. Many Christians seem disinterested or even troubled by the idea that there will be rewards when they feel being in Heaven with Jesus is all that one should desire.

This lack of interest in reward is comparable to Esau who devalued his birthright. That birthright was his inheritance because of his position as firstborn. Positionally the promised seed of the Redeemer would come through Esau. “Blessed to be a blessing to all nations,” was promised to Abraham, passed on to his son Isaac and continued through Esau. However, Genesis 25:34 tells us that Esau despised his birthright and sold it to Jacob for a bowl of stew. In his human thinking he reasoned that his physical needs were more significant than his birthright. The seed then passed through Jacob (**Genesis 35:10–12; Matthew 1:1–2; Acts 3:25b**).

Just as the Savior came through Jacob—who became Israel, to bless all people, the Savior is formed in the Body of Christ and blesses each member so they can be a blessing to all people. Positionally we are members of the Body of Christ and ministers of reconciliation. If we despise our position, choosing not to represent the Lord Jesus Christ to the world and instead focusing on the concerns of this world, we are like Esau and will lose our inheritance (see **Hebrews 12:15–17**). That person remains a child of God, but one without an inheritance or reward. The Body of Christ is blessed with every spiritual blessing in order to be a blessing to the world in this dispensation of grace.

The rewards on that Day are for each member of the Body of Christ who chose to love and obey God and to represent him to a lost and dying world.

What does Apostle Paul say about rewards?

Apostle Paul teaches that there will be a judgment for all believers in the Body of Christ. This is called the *Bema* seat judgment. This is the believers’ judgment at the Rapture for everything done in the body both good and bad.

There is resistance to the teaching of this judgment for believers because some think it would be impossible for God to judge Christians who are saved by grace, through faith and not of works. Another reason for disputing the teaching of a *Bema* seat judgment is the belief there will be no sorrow or tears in Heaven; and, thus there cannot be a judgment that has the potential to bring sadness.

Despite this resistance, the Scriptures teach a judgment for believers. To those in the Body of Christ in Corinth, Paul writes, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad” (**2 Corinthians 5:10**).

So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God (**Romans 14:12**).

If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames **(1 Corinthians 3:12–15)**.

Is there any Scripture that says there is instantly no sorrow or tears in Heaven? **Revelation 7:17** and **21:4** says that God will wipe away tears. The Bible does not teach that there will never be an instance of sorrow in Heaven. If there is not an initial case of grief, then there will be no tears to wipe away.

According to Apostle Paul, our reward will be those souls in Heaven we led to Jesus Christ and/or trained and equipped in the knowledge and love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Perhaps the most confusing or misleading ideas about rewards are that they will be a jeweled crown upon our head (sounds like an eternal headache!), a mansion or cattle on a thousand hills. Some think of Heaven and rewards as eternally floating on clouds and playing a harp or walking through cities of gold. But, this is not what Apostle Paul teaches.

Apostle Paul writes to the Thessalonians “For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of the Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy” **(1 Thessalonians 2:19–20)**.

Again, Paul tells the Philippians, “Therefore my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends” **(Philippians 4:1)**.

As one saved from eternal destruction and belonging forever to Jesus, share salvation with others so they can also be saved. Spend your life in godly words and actions. The people you lead to Christ and then nurture will be your inheritance. And, the more your spiritual children lead others to the Lord, the greater your reward; so, train and equip them to share the gospel with others.

Imagine for all eternity being with your Savior and looking out across the multitude at the souls you led to Christ and taught the Word of God so that they could also evangelize and teach others. This will be the multiplication of souls in Heaven (an everlasting Pyramid Scheme!) because the principle of **2 Timothy 2:2** is put into practice:

And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

What should be done if your motives are wrong?

For some people the motives behind one's actions seem more important than whether or not a person does the right things and obeys God. Paul emphatically urges us to share the gospel despite our motive. If you are sharing the gospel and doing all you can to communicate the good news and

your motives are wrong, do not stop doing what is right. Continue on while changing your motives (**Philippians 1:15–18**).

Do not judge people before the right time (**1 Corinthians 4:5**). Correct yourself but do not judge others and their motives. God did not call us to be the “motive police.” On that Day, God will sort out one’s motives. In the meantime, do everything to bring people to Christ and to encourage others to do the same. Examine your own motives so that when they are exposed, you will not be ashamed.

God has called us to be his ambassadors and to share the gospel. I have a question for you: Suppose someone you deeply love becomes fatally sick and there is only one doctor in the world who is capable of treating that person. If you went to that doctor and discovered their motive for practicing medicine is very immoral or full of self-interest, would you refuse to allow that doctor to cure your loved one? Most people would not be bothered by the motive as long as that person held in their hands the ability to give life. Every believer has life-giving words (**2 Corinthians 2:15–17**).

Correct your motives but never stop sharing Christ with the lost.

Sum Up

Satan is the great Deceiver who has failed at deceiving those who have put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Devil cannot do anything about those souls he has lost forever. However, through deception he can succeed at keeping more souls out of Heaven. Believers are the only ones who can lead another to the LORD. If Christians believe that they cannot do anything to please God; if they think that God has already chosen who will be saved and that nothing they do will have any effect on the outcome; if they feel that sharing the gospel with the lost is optional or should only be done under perfect motives or methods, then the Prince of Darkness has succeeded at keeping more souls out of Heaven.

Make your life count for Jesus Christ. If you believe then speak so that more and more people will turn to the Savior (**2 Corinthians 4:13–15**). This week who will you speak to about Jesus?

Wake up! Your salvation is nearer now than when you first believed (**Romans 13:11**). This verse is a reminder that each day is one day closer to meeting our Savior. For the lost, every day is one day closer to eternal destruction. Today is the day of salvation.

Pray and ask God to show you ways to effectively share the gospel.

Pray for **B-O-B**:

B-urden for the lost.

He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from

the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you (**2 Thessalonians 1:8–10**).

However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace (**Acts 20:24**)

- Pray that your love for God and others will grow more and more.
- Pray for the lost. If you are praying specifically for the lost, it will be difficult to stay disengaged or unmoved by a person’s eternal damnation.

Can you think of someone’s testimony where they have given up the temporary pleasures of this life because of their burden for reaching the lost for Jesus Christ? Be prepared to share.

O-pportunities to share the gospel.

- First, we must know that if we do not share the gospel with others, there is no one else to do it. There is no Plan B (**Romans 10:13–15**).
- Secondly, before we walk out the door in the morning for our day ahead, we must be prayerful and intentional.
- Have a plan and carry it through. Remember sharing Christ with another should be a conversation, not a presentation.

B-oldness to communicate the good news as you should.

- Some believers suppose that if sharing their testimony or the plan of salvation with someone is uncomfortable, then they should not do it.
- Ability to do something is strengthened by doing it.
- Boldness to share the gospel comes through praying and doing.
- Despite fear or discomfort, obey God. You are his minister of reconciliation. You are his ambassador. Do not receive God’s grace in vain (**2 Corinthians 6:1**).
- Paul asked for prayer for boldness to speak: “Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should” (**Ephesians 6:20**).

If you have not done so already, memorize and practice the verses for The Romans Road on page 53. Practice with someone this week.

In Summary

A friend was sharing that in his adult Bible hour he was having difficulty challenging his class to live obediently for the Lord. He taught them about salvation, the Bible, the disciplines of the Christian life and stressed the grace of God and all he had done for them, yet they remained passive. After listening to his frustration over why his students would not commit themselves more fully to Jesus Christ, I asked him, “What difference does it make?”

He repeated what God has done for us and that the Bible tells us we should live for him. I asked him once again, “What difference does it make?” The fact is we stress God’s grace and salvation without works. So, even if we choose to live for him, what difference does it really make since we are going to Heaven either way? This person took my mind map of the mystery and used it to show his class what the Bible has to say about Christian works.

Many Christians stop their spiritual growth after being born again, without understanding that we are saved for a purpose. There is a teaching that once we are saved we can live anyway that we please as long as we acknowledge God and are thankful for his blessings. If salvation is only a ticket to Heaven then the mystery that Apostle Paul spent his life teaching makes no difference at all.

However, Apostle Paul teaches at the moment of salvation the Holy Spirit enters us and is sealed until the day we face Jesus Christ. When this happens we become a new creation and we enter a race. God gives us all the resources needed to compete in this race. While competing, we have responsibilities and restrictions to win the race and receive rewards. These rewards are of great, eternal value.

Paul told the people he led to the Lord that they were his hope, joy and crown. Throughout his life and ministry Paul poured his life into others seeking to save them and to help them mature in the Lord and to become productive Christians. He wanted them to run to receive the prize!

There is nowhere else in the Bible that we can learn what we are supposed to be doing with the days given to us on this earth. My heart’s desire and the one I have for you is what Paul said towards the end of his life, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on the day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:7–8).

Before it’s too late, turn to the Lord and live your life for him according to the teaching of Apostle Paul. I pray that this mind map and Bible study will clarify what God has done for you and what he expects you to do for others so that you can present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

Every moment on earth lived for Jesus Christ is an eternal investment in things above. Missionary Jim Elliot said it well, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.”

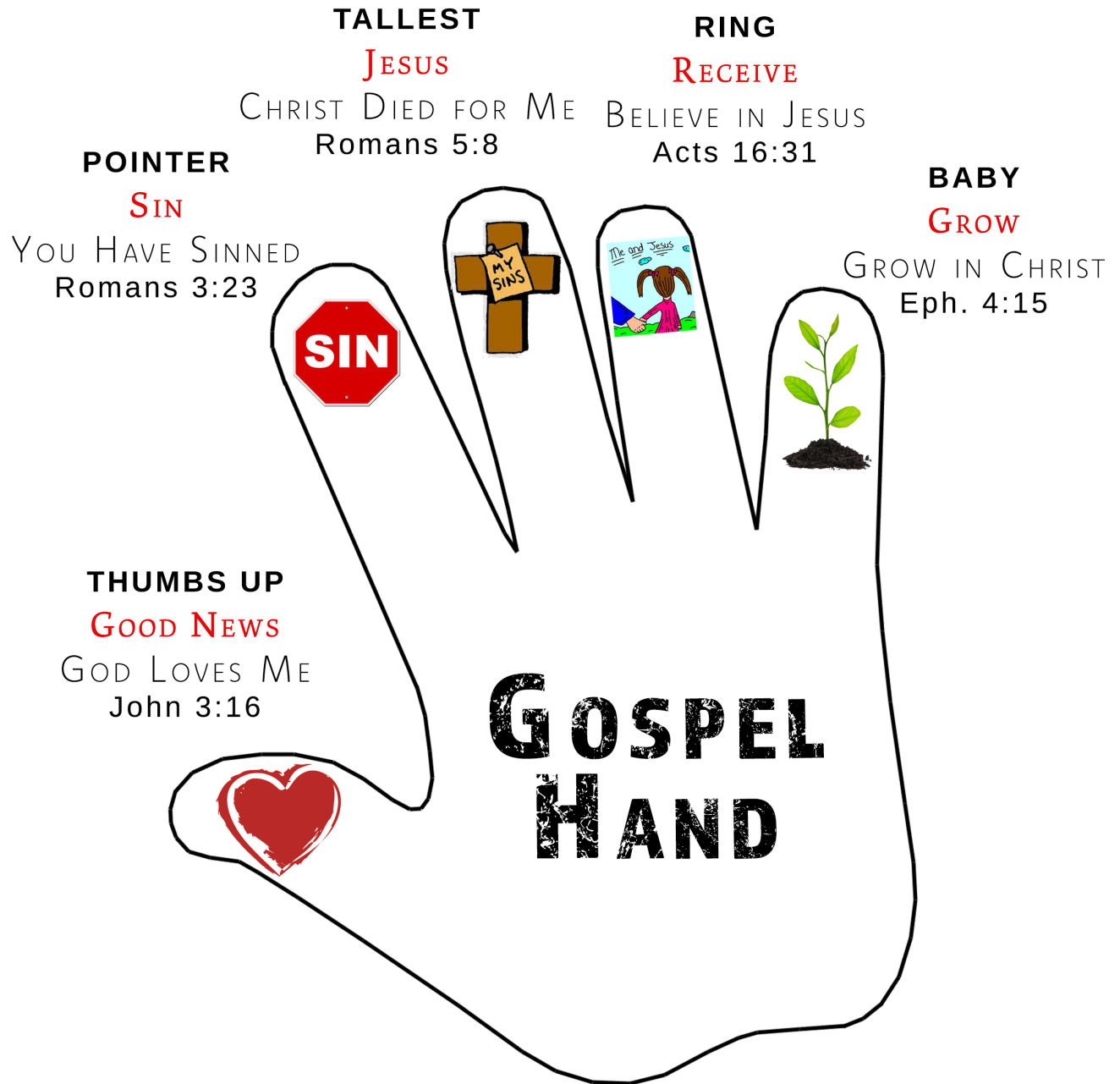
Run the race and be in it to win it!

In Christ,

Joyce Anderson

Additional Resources

Gospel Hand



HOW TO SHARE YOUR TESTIMONY

“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” – 1 Peter 3:15

One of the most effective tools you have for sharing your faith is the story of how Jesus Christ gave you eternal life and how He has enriched your life. The Apostle John wrote, “We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard” (1 Jn. 1:3), testifying about his relationship to Jesus Christ.

When the Apostle Paul stood before King Agrippa (Acts 26), he spoke simply, logically, and clearly about his life *before* salvation, how he met Christ, and what his life was like *after* conversion. Paul’s testimony takes three or four minutes to read aloud in a conversational manner.

By following the steps outlined in this article, you will learn how to tell others in the same manner about how you came to know Christ. The choice of the right words, the flow of your story, and knowing how to begin and how to end are all important.

Testimonies can be prepared on many subjects and tailored to various audiences. The kind of testimony outlined here is designed to give to a non-Christian. It will be best suited for sharing one-on-one or in a small group.

The purpose of preparing a testimony is not to memorize it and give it verbatim, but to help you put into words some of the important and interesting details of your conversion. A testimony serves primarily as a “door opener,” not a “convincing tool.” Many people are not ready to be convinced that they need Christ, but can often be led to talk about the gospel after hearing a personal testimony.

BEFORE, HOW, AND AFTER

Paul’s testimony in Acts 26 is a biblical model you can follow in writing your own personal testimony. Paul’s format in Acts 26 is:

Lead-In — Verses 2–3

Before — Verses 4–11

How — Verses 12–20

After — Verses 21–23

Close — Verses 24–29

Here are practical suggestions for developing the *before*, *how*, and *after* sections in your personal testimony.

Before:

- a. Many people’s actions spring out of their unsatisfied deep inner needs. What were one or two

of your unsatisfied deep inner needs before you came to know Jesus Christ? Some examples of inner needs are:

- lack of peace
- fear of death
- something missing
- no meaning to life
- desire to be in control
- loneliness
- lack of security
- lack of purpose
- lack of significance
- no real friends
- no motivation

b. Non-Christians are usually trying to satisfy their deep inner needs through unsatisfactory solutions. In the past, what unsatisfactory solutions did you use to attempt to meet those deep inner needs? As you develop your testimony, list positive as well as negative solutions you may have tried. Some examples are:

- marriage/family
- work
- drugs/alcohol
- sports/fitness
- money
- education
- hobbies/entertainment
- sex
- wrong friends

How:

a. Describe the circumstances that caused you to consider Christ as the solution to your deep inner needs. Identify the events that led to your conversion. In some cases this may have taken place over a period of time.

b. State specifically the steps you took to become a Christian. If there is a particular passage of Scripture that applies here, you may want to use it. Usually you will simply paraphrase it.

c. Include the gospel clearly and briefly. The gospel includes:

- All have sinned
- Sin's penalty
- Christ paid the penalty
- Must receive Christ

FORMAT ONE

Adult Conversion

Before

A few years ago I found myself lacking purpose in my life. Something was missing. Nothing seemed to fill the void.

I had majored in electrical engineering in college and got a great job when I graduated. I kept striving for one promotion after another, thinking that the next promotion would be the one that would satisfy me. But it never did. I began working longer and longer hours, giving myself to my profession. This began to have a negative effect on my family. I kept telling my wife I was only doing it for her and the kids, but I knew otherwise. What started out as the "ideal" marriage was coming apart at the seams. It got to the point that I did not want to go home at night. "Happy hour" was more fun than arguments.

How

In my next job I was asked to attend an engineering seminar with David and Jack from work. David seemed to have a certain something that was missing in my life.

On the way home from the seminar David told me about how Christ had changed his life and had given him a whole new reason for living. Many of the things he said seemed to be directed right at me. He talked about having been successful in business but that he was always falling short of his goals and expectations. Then he said that the answer to his frustration was to have personally committed his life to Jesus Christ. He had admitted to God that he was living in disobedience and had turned control of his life over to God. He mentioned that the Bible said Christ had died on the cross so we could be forgiven for everything we had ever done wrong. I had heard this before, but now it seemed to make a lot more sense.

A couple of days after I returned home I took a walk down by the lake near our house. I prayed and confessed to God some of the things I had done that I knew had hurt and displeased Him. I asked Christ to come into my life and take over, because I wasn't doing a very good job with it by myself.

After

Well, there was no flash of light or earthquake, but I do know that I felt as if a large weight was lifted from my shoulders. Not everything is perfect now, but I do feel as if I have a whole new purpose for living. God has given me a whole new set of priorities to live by. But the greatest thing of all is that I know for certain that I have the gift of eternal life.

After:

a. State how Christ filled or is filling your deep inner needs. In the *before*, you expressed your needs and how you tried unsuccessfully to meet them. You now want to briefly show the difference that Christ has made in your life.

b. Conclude with a statement like: “But the greatest benefit is that I know for certain that I have eternal life.” The person you talk to will tend to comment on the last thing you say. Often it is natural to move from the testimony into a clear presentation of the gospel.

CHOOSE YOUR TESTIMONY FORMAT

Read the three sample testimonies in the shaded boxes that follow. Then, come back and check the box beside the format that best fits your own story. You will use the Testimony Worksheet (page 52) that corresponds to this format.

Format 1: Adult Conversion

You trusted Christ as an adult. You have a distinct before, how, and after.

Format 2: Early Conversion, Adult Full Commitment

You made a decision for Christ as a child, but your life was characterized by spiritual immaturity—a lifestyle similar to that of a non-Christian—until you reached a point of crisis and recommitted your life to Christ. Evaluate whether your early conversion experience was genuine. If you conclude it was not genuine, then use Format 1 as your model.

Format 3: Early Conversion, Consistent Growth

You probably grew up with Christian parents and have a strong church background. You may have very little *before*.

WRITE OUT YOUR TESTIMONY

The Testimony Worksheets provide questions that will help you get started in writing out your testimony. Select the appropriate worksheet and jot down thoughts for each question on a separate piece of paper. This will give you a basis from which to write sentences and paragraphs about your own experience.

As you write your first draft, refer again to the sample testimony that is most like your own story. Note how the person began the testimony and how he or she made the transitions between the main points. In addition, follow these guidelines:

FORMAT TWO

Early Conversion, Adult Full Commitment

Before Full Commitment

Not too long ago you could have characterized my life as lacking any real inner peace. Everything around me seemed to be in utter turmoil. Nothing I did would ease the tension in my life.

It didn't seem as if anything could fill the longing that was growing in my heart. I thought I could fill that void by getting involved in activities. I joined the health spa, took tennis lessons, was involved in transporting our children to all their various activities. I considered going back to work part-time. Then my husband received a promotion and we were transferred to another city. If I had felt the pressure before, the move just added to the intensity. It seemed that the only relief I could gain was by taking tranquilizers, but that was only temporary and it scared me to realize that I was beginning to depend upon them for relief.

How

We had gotten out of the habit of attending church over the years, but the Johnsons invited us to go to church with them, so we started going. After we had attended for a couple of months, we decided to participate in a Bible study discussion group. There we met people who were fun but took their Christianity seriously. They began to challenge us to really commit our lives to Christ.

We reviewed some things I had heard while growing up that we were all breaking God's laws and deserved to be separated from Him, but that God had provided the way to restore that relationship with Him. That provision was the death of His only Son, Jesus Christ.

What I needed to do about it was acknowledge my disobedience to God and turn from it and ask Christ to come into my life as my Savior and Lord. So I asked Christ to take over my life.

After

It wasn't until we got involved in that mid-week Bible study that I really understood what it meant to be committed to Jesus Christ. It was there that I learned that I could not gain inner peace in my life if I was going to try to run my own life. As a result of the Bible study I made a whole new commitment to Christ. The inner peace that I was striving for so desperately was finally there. But the greatest thing of all is that I know for certain that I have a personal relationship with God and have eternal life.

1. **Make it sound conversational.** Avoid literary sounding statements. Use informal language.
2. **Share about what happened to you, don't preach about what should happen to them.** Say "I" and "me," not "you." This helps keep the testimony warm and personal.
3. **Avoid religious words, phrases, and jargon.**(See chart on page 66.) Don't assume the listener knows what you mean by terms such as sin, accepted Christ, or even Christian.
4. **Generalize so more people can identify with your story.** Don't name specific churches, denominations, or groups. Avoid using dates and ages.
5. **Include some humor and human interest.** When a person smiles or laughs, it reduces tension. Humor is disarming and increases attention.
6. **One or two word pictures increase interest.** Don't just say, "Bill shared the gospel with me." You might briefly describe the setting so a person listening can visualize it.
7. Explain how Christ met or is meeting your deep inner needs, but **do not communicate that all your struggles and problems ended at conversion.**
8. **Sound adult, not juvenile.** Reflect an adult point of view even if you were converted at an early age.
9. **Avoid dogmatic and mystical statements that skeptics can question,** such as, "I prayed and God gave me a job," or "God said to me."
10. Simplify—reduce "clutter."

Mention a limited number of people and use only their first or last names. Combine information when you can.

a. *Poor:* "Martha Smith, Nancy Van Buren, and her cousin Jane Matthews came by my office at Digital Binary Components Corporation . . ."

b. *Good:* "Martha and two other friends talked with me at work one day . . ."

c. *Good:* "After living in five states and attending six universities, I finally graduated and got an engineering job."

PRACTICING YOUR TESTIMONY

After you have written out your testimony, you may want to have another Christian read it and make suggestions for improvement. Ask them to point out any areas that you need to explain further and to make sure the gospel is presented clearly. Then, when you have a final draft that you like, outline your testimony on a 3" x 5" card. Practice giving your testimony to a friend in four minutes or less. Sharing your testimony with your small group would also be an excellent opportunity to practice and receive feedback.

FORMAT THREE Early Conversion, Consistent Growth

Before

As I look around me I see people feverishly trying to fill voids in their lives. Men are giving themselves to their jobs, and in the process sacrificing their families. A number of my fellow workers seem to be trying to find meaning in their lives, but just when they think they have attained what they want, they realize these things are not meeting their deepest needs. I find myself being involved in many of these same activities, but I am finding satisfaction. What is the difference?

How

I realize that I'm not reacting to life the way many people do for a good reason. I have something in my life that has given me peace and purpose that many others do not have. I have discovered that a personal relationship with Jesus Christ fills the voids that many people are trying to fill with activities and things that just don't satisfy.

As I was growing up, my parents were very active in church. Because they were active they figured that I should be also. So every Sunday, there we were. What was real to them was just a game to me. Then one summer I attended a church summer camp. This changed my whole view of "religion." I discovered at this camp that Christianity was more than a religion, it was a personal relationship with God through His Son, Jesus Christ. In the evenings our discussions centered around who Jesus Christ was and what He did. They were interesting to me. One day after we had finished sports my counselor asked me if I had ever personally committed my life to Jesus Christ or if I was still thinking about it. I told him I was still thinking about it. We sat down and talked. He explained from the Bible what I would need to do to become a real Christian. I saw that I had done many things wrong and that the penalty was eternal death! I saw that Christ had died on the cross to set me free from that penalty. I prayed with my counselor right there and committed my life to Jesus Christ.

After

As I grew physically I also grew spiritually. I find that when I try to do things my way and leave God out of the picture, I have the same struggles as everyone else. But when I let Him be in control, I experience a peace that can only come from Him. But the greatest thing of all is that I know for certain that I have eternal life.

LEADING INTO YOUR TESTIMONY

When you feel comfortable giving your testimony, you may begin to wonder, “When do I share it with a non-Christian?” “How do I direct the conversation so it will lead to presenting my testimony?” You may find the following suggestions helpful.

1. **Include some “small talk” before discussing spiritual matters.** Discuss family, job, hobbies, interests, etc.
2. **Be alert for expressed needs such as family problems or stress on the job.** You can use these to show how Christ has helped you through some of the same areas.
3. **Discuss past concerns and needs in your life.** “We used to struggle in our marriage relationship,” or, “I used to allow the pressures at work to get to me.” “Then I discovered something that made a tremendous difference in my life.”
4. **Discuss contemporary situations in the news or in your area.** “I saw on TV that drugs are epidemic in our country. It seems that people are trying to find something that satisfies so they are turning to drugs. These same people are saying it does not work.”
5. **Build relationships with them.** It may take ten minutes or ten hours or ten days or ten months—but build relationships.
6. **Don’t condemn them for living like non-Christians, they are non-Christians.** Your objective is to share how they can have a better life in Christ.
7. **Avoid dogmatic “religious” statements.** “Jesus is the answer to all your problems.” He is, but they don’t even know who He is, much less what He can do in their lives.
8. **Avoid arguments on moral issues.** You can expect non-Christians to have conflicts with clear biblical teaching. Remember they do not have a valid base from which to make correct moral decisions.

RELIGIOUS WORDS	POSSIBLE SUBSTITUTES
Believe/Accepted	Trusted or relied
Christ for my salvation	On Christ
Sin	Disobedience, breaking God’s laws, turned my back on God
Went forward	Decided to turn my life over to God
Under the blood	God forgave the wrongs I had done
Saved/Born Again	Became a real Christian
Christian	Committed Christian, real Christian

THE CLOSE

When you have shared your personal testimony, you may want to conclude with a statement that causes the person to reflect on what you have just shared. What you say will depend on how this person has been responding to what you have shared. If their response seems positive you could say something like:

1. “Bill, has anything like this ever happened to you?”
2. “Mary, do you know for certain whether you have eternal life?”
3. “Do you have any idea what eternal life is?”
4. “May I share with you some day how I know for certain that I have eternal life?”
5. “May I share an illustration with you that explains how a person can know for certain that he has eternal life?”

If their response seems negative or neutral you could say something like:

1. “If you are interested I would like to share more with you sometime.”
2. “Do you have any questions on what I have just shared with you?”
3. “Well, that is what happened to me. If you ever want to talk about it any further, I would love to do so.”

Testimony Worksheet

Format 1: Adult Conversion

Before

1. What was a deep inner need in your life before you met Christ?
2. Give some examples of how you tried to meet or fulfill that need with unsatisfactory solutions?

How

1. Describe the circumstances that caused you to consider Christ.
2. State how you trusted Christ. (Briefly include the gospel.)

After

1. Give an example of how Christ met or is currently meeting your deep inner needs.
2. End with a statement to the effect that you know for certain that you have eternal life.

Format 2: Early Conversion, Adult Full Commitment

Before Deeper Commitment

1. What was a deep inner need you were trying to fill?
2. Give some examples of how you tried to fill that inner need through unsatisfactory solutions.

How

1. Briefly describe the situation in which you made a deeper commitment to Christ.
2. Refer to your conversion experience. State how you trusted Christ. Briefly include the gospel.

After

1. State how Christ is currently meeting your deep inner needs.
2. End with a statement that you know for certain you have eternal life.

Format 3: Early Conversion, Consistent Growth

Before

1. State the deep inner needs you see people trying to fill.
2. Describe how you see people trying to satisfy those needs.

How

1. Explain why you never experienced this problem.
2. Refer to your conversion experience. State how you trusted Christ. Briefly include the gospel.

After

1. Illustrate how Christ met or is meeting your deep inner needs.
2. End with a statement to the effect that you know for certain that you have eternal life.

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The Romans Road to Salvation

Romans 3:23

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Romans 6:23

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Romans 5:8

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Romans 10:13

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Romans 12:1–2

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Suggestions for Praying for the Lost

1. Make a list of people you know or encounter through the week.
2. Choose 3 people who you know are not saved.
3. Write each name on the top of a 3” x 5” index card.
4. Pray about what you should pray regarding each person.
 - Give me eyes to see their spiritual thirst (everyone breathing needs Jesus).
 - Give me opportunities to speak to them.
 - Show me opportunities to get closer to them.
 - That the conversations and relationship will lead to a decision for Christ.
5. Watch for answers on your prayer list.
 - Help me cooperate with God on how he will use me.
 - Make me more sensitive and observant about spiritual journey and how God might use me.
6. Share your updates with a prayer partner.
7. Spend next 30 days praying for individuals by name. Ask God to:
 - Open their spiritual eyes (2 Corinthians 4:4) *“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”*
 - Encourage their faith to believe (Acts 20:21) *“I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.”*
 - Give them the will to respond (Romans 10:9) *“That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”*
 - Open heart to respond to the gospel (Acts 16:14) *“... The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message.”*
 - Set them free from spiritual captivity (2 Timothy 2:25-26) *“... and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.”*
 - Set free as slaves to sin (Romans 6:17) *“But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted.”*
 - Give boldness to witness (Acts 4:29; Ephesians 6:19) *“Now Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.”*
 - For opportunities to witness (Colossians 4:3) *“And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.”*
 - Give ways to build caring relationships (I Corinthians 9:22) *“To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.”*



NOTES
