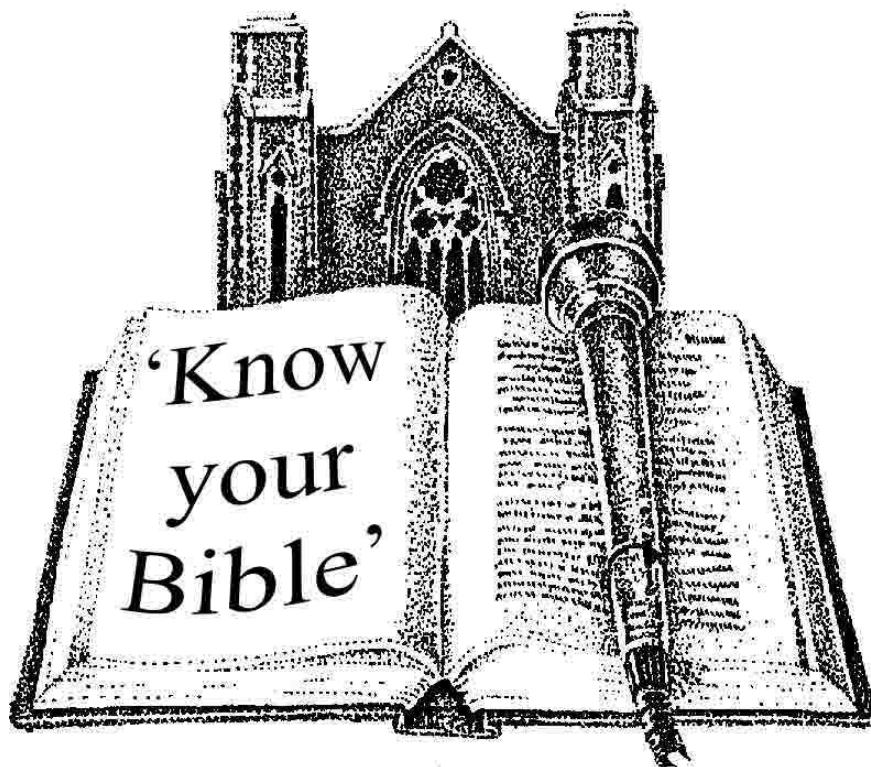


MORE questions answered

Summary of the series.

Study Notes by Stuart Olyott



MORE questions answered

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1. I am a Christian.

What should - my attitude be o my daily work?

1. Work is God-given.

It is a divine ordinance - not a 'necessary evil'.

It is God's will that men should work.

- God Himself works, Genesis 2:3, John 5:17; and we are made in His image, Genesis 1:26-27.
- Hence Adam, even in his perfection, worked. Genesis 2:15.
- Other Scripture passages make it clear that, it is God's intention for us to work. That this is so is a testimony to God's wisdom. See Psalm 104:19-24. Isaiah 28:23-29.
- The Fourth Commandment teaches the same lesson. Exodus 20:9. Deuteronomy 5:13.
- Even in heaven, in glory, we shall work!! Revelation 7:15, 22:3.

2. Work has become toil.

- When sin came into the world, work ceased to be a joy, and became toil. Frustration; monotony; drudgery; disappointment: - these are all part of the curse of God, which came on us after the Fall. See Genesis 3:16-19.
- It has become an occasion for all sorts of sins
 - some people take their work and its rewards the be-all and end-all of their lives. They are idolaters. Luke 12:16-22.
 - some people use the existence of work as a means of exploiting and oppressing others. Exodus 1:11-14, 2:23. James 5:4.

=====

A Christian bears in, minds these two facts:-

- if he does NOT work, he is in open rebellion against God, who ordained it, and created him to do it.
- if he DOES work, he will feel the effects of the curse, and see, in his life at work, all sorts of sins committed.

3. Work is compulsory.

- Jesus worked! Mark 6:3. There can then be no Christ likeness without it, and there is certainly no blessing to the sluggard Proverbs 6:6-11, 10:4, 13:4. 20:4.
- Paul worked! Acts 18:3.
- We are to work! There are no IF's and BUT's about it. 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12, 2 Thessalonians 3:7-15. Ephesians 4:28.

4. Work is to be done to the glory of God.

Ephesians 6:5-9 "....as the servants of Christ".
Colossians 3:22-4:1 "...as to the Lord".

Christ Himself is your employer! (even if you are an employer!) :

- So be punctual
- So be thorough and careful
- So work conscientiously, giving a full day' s work
- So concentrate all your energy and interest on your work for HIM!

- The monotony and drudgery are for HIM!
- HE will provide opportunities for soul winning there.
- But never to the detriment of the work HE has called you to do.

If HE were the boss you would

- be more honest; more just in disputes.
- be well turned-Out
- be a friend; a considerate work-mate
- be willing to be known as a Christian.

Well, He IS the employer!!

How the working-places of our land need the fragrance of true Christian workmanship and Christ like character!!

Some closing notes:-

- It is those who will not work which God's Word condemns, not those who cannot work.
- It is unthinkable that a Christian should be non-employed when there is some sort of work available. However the emphasis in Scripture is that people should work in jobs which make use of their gifts and acquired skills.
- God's Word knows nothing of the "working mother" we have an example of
A single woman working (or was she a widow?) in Acts 16:14.
A wife works alongside her husband in Acts 18:3.
But the normal role of women is made clear in 1Timothy 2:15, 5:14, Titus 2:3-5.
- Although work is a great part of life, it is not the whole of life. The Scripture contains a doctrine of leisure, which we shall examine in a future

2. What ambitions is a Christian allowed to have?

There is power in ambition - make no mistake. (Demosthenes; Lord Roseberry...)

Many people achieve nothing in this life, for they AIM for nothing.

- They have no master-ambition which governs them
- They have no unifying-principle
- They have no mainspring, which controls how they 'tick'.

Right ambitions

Christ's.

- His ambition was to do the will of God. John 5:30.
- He lived for this; it consumed His whole time and attention.
- It was His daily food - John 4:34
- It was His constant delight - Psalm 40:7-8. (Hebrews 10:7).
- It was His deepest prayer - Luke 22:42-44
- This ambition governed Him completely.
- And He has left us an example that we should FOLLOW IN HIS STEPS. 1 Peter 2:21.

Lesson 1. No ambition is legitimate, unless this is the master-ambition, the inspiring motive - to do the will of God, whatever the cost.

[Are you willing to do this?]

Paul's

- His ambition was to be holy.
- He expresses this in different ways; but this is always what it amounts to:-
- "I press toward the mark." Philippians 3:7-21.
- "We labour, that ...we may be accepted of (pleasing to) HIM. 2 Corinthians 5:9.
- He commands all believers to have these same ambitions. Philippians 3:15-17, 1 Corinthians 4:16, 11:1

Lesson 2. No ambition is legitimate, unless it serves this master-ambition - to be holy and well pleasing to God.

In short:-

A Christian, being a spiritual person, has spiritual ambitions as the great driving forces of his life.

All else takes second place to this.

No other ambition is allowable,

unless it positively helps in the fulfilling of these spiritual ambitions.

All ambitions which DO help in this way are therefore permitted. What liberty!!

Forbidden ambitions

On the whole, 3 main ambitions rule the world:-

- to build a reputation; to be someone.
- to amass wealth or possessions.
- to wield power.

To have reputation, wealth, or power, is not in itself wrong.

But to spend your time and energy seeking such things

- to have the desire for them as the DRIVING FORCE in your life - this is wrong.

Reputation 2 Chronicles 32:25. Daniel 4:30ff. Jeremiah 45:5. John 5:44.

Wealth Matthew 6:19. 1Timothy 6:6-12. Ecclesiastes 5:10.

Power Mark 10:35-45. Christ's disapproval meets James' and John's request, for their motive was 'for us'.

Lesson 3. No ambition is legitimate which merely seeks the advancement of your SELF.

["Why? because we were made to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever".
and "we belong to God, we are not our own, we are Gods by creation and by redemption"]

"A God-approved ambition must be pure and noble, tinged with self-abnegation and self-sacrifice. The disciple recognizes that he belongs to Christ..... Like his Lord, he cherishes the ambition to give rather than to receive, to serve rather than to be served to use his time and talents for his Master rather than debase them in pursuit of self-aggrandisement." (J. Oswald Sanders).

A closing note

- many people - even Christian people - have NO ambitions.
- They drift. Others have chosen their ambitions, but they choose to drift along and simply take whatever comes.
- God is severely displeased with such an attitude, for it is directly contrary to the command to live to His glory. There are very many who need to REPENT of this ungodly attitude.

**["You have a purpose in life, therefore live to full fill it"
So what ambitions do you have??]**

3. How should I use my leisure time?

The teaching of the Fourth Commandment

God says Six days shall you LABOUR, and do all you WORK".

Exodus 20:9, Deuteronomy 5:13.

- This does not mean we must spend six full days earning our living: Scripture makes it clear that we have other things which MUST be done during the week - for instance we must eat, sleep, tend the family, serve our neighbours...etc...
- We must understand that when Scripture speaks of LABOUR and WORK, it means more than just earning our living, and includes **everything else** that we do in the week. What we today call "leisure" is even included in the words LABOUR and WORK:
- The fact that 'Scripture uses the words LABOUR and WORK, even of our leisure-time, teaches us two things:-
 - Leisure does not consist of "doing nothing".
 - Leisure is to be active, and purposeful.

Leisure does not consist of "doing nothing".

- Doing nothing, leads to sin. 2 Samuel 11:1-3. [King David and Bathsheba]
- People who do nothing are constantly condemned by the Word of God. See Proverbs 6:6-11, 10:26, 15:19, 18:9, 26:15-16 etc...
- To do nothing is to contradict a man's whole make-up. He is made in the image of God - who works! Genesis 1:26-27, 2:3, John 5:17.

Leisure is to be active and purposeful.

- We are created and commanded to live to the glory of God. That is the PURPOSE of life; and it requires ACTION. Romans 11:36, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Colossians 3:17.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ had, rest and leisure; but there was a PURPOSE in it. Mark 6:30-31, Luke 9:10
- It can be seen at once that Scripture completely contradicts: ' many modern notions concerning leisure.

Scriptural suggestions

- God has given us "all things richly to enjoy". It is legitimate to enjoy His gifts of love; friendship; music; art; the countryside; travel etc. But they are not to become idols.
- "Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with thy might." Ecclesiastes 9:10. We are to use our abilities to the full. But not all, or most, of a person's abilities are used earning his living. He should use them at other times - hobbies; favours....
- Some time spent in bodily exercise meets with the approval of Scripture 1 Timothy 4:8. 1 Samuel 20:35-40. New Testament pictures of athlete.
- There lies in Scripture a doctrine of the family, where each member is to have strong and clearly defined relationships with the others. All the world knows this takes TIME. Time with the family is a priority.
- We also have responsibilities to our neighbours - see the Good Samaritan, and commands like. "be not weary in well doing". This also takes TIME.
- Many men of God also spent much of their leisure time in the lost art of meditation. Genesis 24:63. Psalm 1:2. Psalm 8:3. John 1:48.
- Our church life is also to be a great priority. It is sinful to organise our leisure-time in such away that we cannot fulfil Acts 2:42.
- The Great Commission still stands [it has never been withdrawn] (Matthew 28:18-20), and cannot be fulfilled only at our places of employment. The world perishes; and a significant proportion of our leisure time should be spent in spreading the Gospel.
 - There is a danger that we will pursue only SOME of these activities, to the exclusion of the rest. It is vital to keep a sense of proportion; a balance.
 - To do this requires forethought, and planning. We are commanded to be "redeeming the time" (Ephesians 5:16), and this cannot be done unless we are regularly assessing how well we use our time.

[so we must think through and plan how we use are time]

Our lives will be richer; healthier; happier; more holy; more worshipful; and much more blessed to others - if we practically grasp these Scriptural principles concerning leisure.

4. What should be my attitude to money?

The ordinary people of Britain have never had so much money.
God's Word has a very great deal to say about the subject.
Here are some of the most important things:-

1. It is right to have money, and to use it.

Abraham did.	Genesis 23:9, 16
David did.	1 Chronicles 21:24-25
Jeremiah did.	Jeremiah 32:9
Jesus and the Twelve did.	John 12:6, 3:27-30
Godly women did.	Luke 8:3

And how were Paul's constant journeying on sea and land made possible, if no money exchanged hands?

2. It is wrong to LOVE money.

This is because the love of money is the root of all evil. 1Timothy 6:10
It leads to nothing but trouble, misery and sin.

For instance:-

Family trouble	Proverbs 15:27
Frustration	Ecclesiastes 5:10
Theft	Joshua 7:21.
Injustice	Proverbs 28:20, Jeremiah 6:13, Acts 6:19
Oppression	Genesis 31:41, Micah 2:2, James 5:4
Forgetfulness of God and eternal issues	Deuteronomy 8:13-14, Luke 12:15-21.
Scoffing against spiritual truths	Luke 16:13-14.
Damnation!!	Mark 10:17-27, James 5:1-6.
Loss of spiritual judgement	1Timothy 3:3, 8, Titus 1:7, 1 Peter 5:2
Dead orthodoxy	Ezekiel 33:31
Apostasy	Mark 4:19, 1 Timothy 6:9-10, 2 Peter 2:15
Betrayal of Christ	Matthew 26:15-16

The Bible is not exaggerating, then, when it calls the love of money the ROOT of ALL evil!

How to know if you are a lover of money

Do you think about money?	Proverbs 23:7.
Do you talk about money?	Matthew 12:34-35
Do you like the idea of having lots of it?	1Timothy 6:9
Do you like the idea of getting money without working for it??	

This is one of the chief characteristics of the money-lovers condemned in the Bible. Proverbs 21:6, Jeremiah 17:11, 22:13. Psalm 15:5 etc...

How NOT to be a money - lover

Mortify all that encourages the love of money in you. Colossians 3:5

Practice disciplined contentment. 1Timothy 6:6, Hebrews 13:5

For instance - give thanks to God for each necessity
He provides. This gives birth to a sense of gratitude, and a trust in God's care.
The love of money cannot live in such an atmosphere.

Consider how uncertain riches are Proverbs 23:5, 1Timothy 6:17

Think on the foolishness of only being rich in THIS life.
Psalm 39:6, 49:10, Matthew 6:19. 16:26, 1Timothy 6:7

Seek godliness - true riches! Proverbs 13:7, Matthew 6:20, 1 Timothy 6:6

Give money away Ephesians 4:28, 1 Timothy 6:18

“Godliness with contentment is GREAT GAIN”

5. How important IS the prayer meeting?

We stress that it is the responsibility of every Christian to attend the church's Prayer Meeting, unless legitimately hindered.

But IS the Prayer Meeting as important as we maintain?

A promise concerning church prayer.

Matthew 18:18-20.

To the church at prayer, God has given - a unique authority, - and the presence of His Son.

Examples of church prayer

From the Acts of the Apostles

1:14-15, 24,
2:4.

Pentecost was a sovereign act of God.
However, it must not be forgotten that it was an answer to prayer!

All who wish to see the spirit outpoured, and the purposes of God advanced, will gather to pray with the church.

2:42, 3:1.

Set times of prayer were an integral part of local church life, and look at the results! (2:43-47).

In the New Testament, to associate with a local church implied willingness to join with that church at prayer

4:23-33

Because of church prayer, the church was sustained in persecution. Not only so, but it increasingly became a church. which was witnessing powerfully.

Lack of church prayer is the PRINCIPAL cause of our weakness today.

12:5, 12.

By church prayer, God brought Peter from prison.
All who wanted to see the righteous delivered, and the impossible performed, would have been at that prayer meeting!

6:6, 13:3,
14:23

It was to churches at prayer that God revealed His mind regarding elders, deacons and missionaries.

All who wish to see godly leadership in the churches, and labourers thrust into the harvest, will be at the prayer gatherings of the local church.

Requests for church prayer

Romans 15:30-32	Church prayer is requested for safety from men, and in travelling; for success In a particular area; and look at the motives for church prayer which are urged upon them!
Ephesians 6:18-20, Colossians 4:3-4,	for all the saints; for opportunities; and for boldness in Gospel-preachers.
1 Thessalonians 5:17-18, 25. 1Timothy 2:1-16.	They are always to be at it! Church life without church prayer is unthinkable to Paul!
Hebrews 13:18	For a good conscience and honest life on the part of Christian workers; and the writer's restoration to his readers.
James 5:14-15.	For the sick

These promises, examples and requests show us what estimate GOD'S WORD gives of church prayer.

Our mistake has not been to stress it too much; but to stress it too little!

A return to church prayer will bring about that reformation and revival which we so earnestly and deeply desire.

**“Therefore to him who knows to do good,
and does not do it, to him it is SIN” James 4:17. NKJV**

6. What is “worldliness”?

The word "world"

This word is used in many different ways, even today.
So it is in Scripture:-

- The created world. John 1:10, Matthew 16:26.
- The world of men and women. Matthew 4:8-9, John 16:21, 3:16, 11:27.
- The world of men and women, not as God intended it, but in rebellion against God.

This is often described as "this world":-

- a. a world of sin and death. Romans 5:12
 - b. a world ruled by Satan. 1 John 5:19.
 - c. a world living by its own wisdom, and unable by its own reason to know God, or to recognise His Christ. 1 Corinthians 1:20-21, John 1:10
 - d. a world which has two main characteristics. see 1 John 2:16 :-
- **pride** It does not acknowledge God as Lord, or its dependence upon Him. It believes that it is master of its own destiny
 - **lust** It is most attracted to those things which appeal to its physical senses. (Possessions, money; entertainment; food and drink; 'experiences').

To be worldly" is to be 'pervaded by the spirit and atmosphere of 'this world'

- The unconverted are totally worldly.
- But Christians may still have areas in their lives where worldliness persists.

The Christian and "this world"

No-one can be free from worldliness until he is born of God, and comes to faith. 1 John 5:4-5. (Regeneration! not improvement!).

Until then he is controlled by the atmosphere of this world, but should now be finished with it. Colossians 2:20.

This is because the Lord Jesus Christ met the prince of this world, defeated him, and delivered His people from his power. John 12:30-31, 14:30, 16:11.

- Christians are no longer part of 'this world' - they are a people whom the Father has given to Christ OUT of this world. John 17:9, 16.
- They hate this world's passing order, and prefer the will of God. 1 John 2:15-17.
- The world accepts false religion, but hates them. 1 John 4:5, John 17:4.
- But although they know this means tribulation (John 16:33), they also know that to be the world's friend is to be God's enemy. James 4:4.

God's will for them is that they should remain IN the world,
but not be influenced by its atmosphere or standards. John 17:15-16.

Instead they are the salt of the earth - maintaining a distinct and godly 'flavour in the world
- an antidote to its spreading corruption. Matthew 5:13-16.

They are to go into ALL the world, preaching the Gospel - the very opposite of worldliness.
Mark 16:15.

And as they thus love the Lord and keep His commandments, they may count on Christ
manifesting Himself to them - something He does not do to the world John 14:21-24.

They can also look forward to the time when the evil one will be put down, the sons of God
revealed in their true glory, the creation sharing in their glorious liberty;
When God shall be all in all, and it shall be that the kingdoms of this world are become
"The kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever".
Romans 8:21. 1 Corinthians 15:28. Revelation 11:15.

Hallelujah !

7. What does the Bible teach about race?

Some things to realise

- **'Race' does not equal 'immigration'**
2/3 of immigrants are of the same race as the majority of Britain people. 1/3 are not.
- **'Race' does not equal 'nation'**.
Every nation in history has been composed of more than one race.
You can be members of the same nation, and yet of different races - and vice-versa.
- **'Race' does not equal 'culture'**. Most Jamaicans and Nigerians are of the same race (Negro), but their cultures are poles apart. But a Negro born and bred in Liverpool may be culturally a true 'Scouser', although he of a different race to many other Scousers.

This sermon is about RACE; and not; these other issues.

Some facts

Racial prejudice is widespread in our country, especially against men and women who are black (whether they be British or immigrant).

- the 1968 Commonwealth Immigration Act stemmed the flow of certain citizens into this country on the grounds of their colour, and withdrew solemn promise we had made to them.
- the 1971 Immigration Act eased the flow of white immigrants, and made it more difficult for coloured immigrants to enter Britain.
- it is a well-documented fact that in the areas of housing, employment, provision of services etc. there is massive discrimination against black people - especially in our own city. This applies to both British blacks and immigrant blacks.
The good Race Relations Acts of 1965 and 1968 have not cured this.
- most British people discuss race as if black people were somehow inferior, and as if there were no black members of THIS nation reading the same papers, watching the same TV etc.. Even the British black is considered to be one of 'them', not one of 'us'
- they are willing to believe all sorts of fantasies about black people - that they are less intellectual more likely to have large families etc..

Evangelical Christians are not exempt from racial prejudice:-

- the last two points above apply to many Christians.
- many believers are so occupied with other things - personal holiness, evangelism, combating the sexual permissiveness of the day etc., that they give no thought to the social injustices of our land.
- in this way they simply absorb many of the attitudes of the world around them. Many Christians would be uneasy if black people moved next door to them; and others would be horrified if one of their children married a black person. Such attitudes are plain prejudice; and without Scriptural warrant.
- in many Christian's minds 'black' is associated with 'sin'. They describe sin as a 'black thing's and talk about having a 'black heart'. See, however, Isaiah 4:4.8, Revelation 12:3, 17:4.

Some things the Bible does NOT teach.

- Genesis 9:25. It does NOT teach that Ham was cursed, and therefore Ham's descendants are to be in subjection to everyone else. It was Canaanites who entered into the curse - a white Semitic people! The curse was fulfilled in Joshua 9:23.
- Acts 17:26. It does NOT teach that God has appointed different areas for different nations. Even if it did, this is not the same thing as restricting RACES to certain areas. Here Paul is testifying to the nature of God, and His interest in the whole of humanity, and is teaching that the length of a nation's prosperity, and its boundaries, are in GOD'S hands, not its own.
- It does NOT frown on racial intermarriage. Both Rahab and Ruth married into Israel, and were ancestors of the Lord Jesus Christ. Moses married an Ethiopian, and those who criticised the marriage were punished by God. Numbers 12. If society disapproves, that is irrelevant. God doesn't.

Some things the Bible does teach.

- ALL men are equally made in the image of God. Genesis 1:26-27, 9:6. Proverbs 14:31, 17:5. James 3:9. So EVERY single person has the same dignity, rights; responsibilities.
- Any form of favouritism or discrimination is therefore unjust, and a sin against God.
- ALL men are sinners. Romans 3:10-23, 5:12-21
- some cultures and communities may be more wicked than others but, it does not follow that any RACE is more sinful than another.
- if some people are discriminated against, and pushed into crowded conditions, deprived of jobs. etc. they may well react criminally. But this does not mean that their particular RACE is more sinful than another. Indeed, the race which discriminates against them is guilty of appalling wickedness.
- ALL who are in Christ are one. Ephesians 2:11-21; Galatians 3:28, Acts 10:34-35, Revelation 5:9-10, 7:9-10. A person's race, background, status, ability etc. is irrelevant in Christ's church.
- EVERY person is equally a brother or sister in Christ. Whoever or whatever he or she is!!

Some things to do

- As a Christian citizen, do what you can to ensure that our society becomes increasingly just and socially righteous. (Amos 1 and 2).
- Constantly remember that Christ's people are the new Israel, and a new nation, and do not permit racial differences to obscure this truth, or to affect local church life in any way. (Romans 2:28-29, 1 Peter 2:9).
- Do not let worldly attitudes into your mind. The prejudice of other people is never to affect what WE do. See Galatians 2:14,
- Remember that we are commanded in the Word of God to be compassionate, helpful and welcoming to immigrants. Exodus 22:21, Leviticus 19:33-34, Deuteronomy 1:16-17.
- Be concerned that in a multiracial nation and city, our own church is not noticeably multiracial. Preach the Gospel to EVERY creature. Mark 16:15.

8. What are the chief causes of backsliding?

What backsliding is NOT

Apostasy

- The true believer is a new creation with a new heart and spirit. 2 Corinthians 5:17.
- The OVERALL trend in his life is fruit-bearing, holiness, perseverance. Galatians 5:22ff
- Some people claim to be believers, and have many of their characteristics. But they cease to make spiritual progress, drawback, and walk out on the faith.
- Such people never had change of nature. They are lost. They are apostates. They are described in Luke 8:5-15, John 15:1-8, 2 Peter 2:20-22, Hebrews 6:4-8 etc.. Examples of apostates are Esau; King Saul; Judas Iscariot.
- They enter into a settled state, and cannot be renewed again to repentance. The backslider is entirely different - as we shall see.

Doubt

- Human doubted that God was his God - yet spontaneously cried to Him, desired Him, longed to glorify Him. He doubted; but his heart was right. Psalm 88.
- John the Baptist had doubts about the Christ Whom he had recognised - but you would hardly consider him to be a backslider! Matthew 11:2-15.
- Thomas could not believe Jesus was risen, but still gathered with the disciples and was soon after worshipping his Lord and God. John 21:24-29.

Falling

- No believer is free from sin. Romans 7:21-25. 1 John 1:8.
- This does not alter the fact that the OVERALL trend in his life is to holiness.
- Every major character in the Bible has at least one sin recorded in its pages.
- But to say that most of them were backsliders would be untrue and unfair.

Immaturity

- We enter the spiritual life by the new birth. John 3:3, 5-6. 1 Peter 1:23.
- We are then as babes, who need to grow to maturity. 1 Peter 2:2. Ephesians 4:14.
- But some born-again people remain babes, and do not grow to maturity. They display the instabilities, frivolities and characteristics of children. 1 Corinthians 3:1-4, Ephesians 4:14-16, Hebrews 5:11-6:3.
- Such people are a greater grief than backsliders.
- A baby who does not grow up breaks its parent's hearts far more than a growing child who is ill!

What backsliding IS

- It only happens to believers, not counterfeit believers
- It is a VERY RARE condition. Exceptional. You would be hard-pressed to find half-a-dozen individual backsliders in the Bible.
- It is where a believer Sins, but does not repent at once. He ceases to walk with God for some time. His love is cold; his desires for God small; his obedience failing. He ceases to be what he once was
- It is never a permanent thing. Eventually he is renewed again to repentance (unlike the apostate) and returns to his God.

Some examples

- Samson - Judges 13-16. He forgot his calling followed his passions; and forsook his country. "He did not know that the Lord was departed from him" 16:20. But returned to the Lord before his triumphal death, Judges 16:28.
- David - 2 Samuel 11-12. He forgot his calling; followed his passions by sinning with Bathsheba; murdered Uriah; did not walk with God for a year; - but returned to the Lord after Nathan's rebuke, and confessing his sin returned in repentance. Psalm 51.
- Jonah - Jonah 1-2. He tried to turn his back on his calling, fled from God's presence; was arrested by His strange providence; and repented and returned to the Lord in the fish's belly.

Some things to note

- Backsliding starts when a person ceases to be vitally aware (deliberately or otherwise) of what God has called them to be.
- The nation of Israel's backsliding's are constantly attributed to its forgetting of its unique relationship with God. Exodus 32:4. Deuteronomy 4:7-9. Deuteronomy 8:11-20. Psalm 78:10-11.
- That is why in the New Testament we are first of all called to **REMEMBER** what God has done for us, before we are urged to walk in His ways. Romans 12:1-2. Ephesians 4:1. Colossians 3:1-10.

THE MAIN CAUSE OF BACKSLIDING IS **FORGETFULNESS OF GOD'S GRACE.**

- the backslider may go very far away from God - into immorality, murder, deceit.
- yet in his heart he cannot finally forsake the Lord.
- He is immediately restored on repentance. see 1 John 1:9.

To prevent backsliding, you must keep what God has done for you constantly in your mind. The means of grace in Acts 2:41-47 are the Scriptural way to do this.

Those who profess (or have professed) to be believers, but who are not walking with God tonight, must solemnly realise:-

- if you stay as you are now, you will be lost. Hebrews 12:14. The fact that you could not be renewed again to repentance will demonstrate that you are apostatising.
- if you return to the Lord, there is unconditional pardon awaiting you. Isaiah 55: 6-7, Jeremiah 3:12-14. 1 John 1:9.
- The fact that you return will demonstrate that you are God's child, who was backsliding.

THERE IS MERCY FOR ALL WHO WILL RETURN.
THERE IS NO MERCY WITHOUT RETURNING.

“Return unto me, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts” Malachi 3:7.

9. How can I become godly?

- We are not talking about the theory of sanctification.
- We are talking about the practical steps that a Christian must take to become more holy, more Christ like.

Godliness comes about THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD.

- This is the principle taught in Matthew 4:4. John 17:17. Ephesians 5:18. Colossians 3:16
- It is most clearly taught in 2 Timothy 3:15-17:-
 - If we:-
 - BELIEVE what the whole Word of God tells us (doctrine)
 - CUT OUT what it commands (reproof)....
 - PUT RIGHT what it directs (correction)....
 - BEHAVE as it teaches (instruction in righteousness)....
 - then we shall be men (and women) of God, in every way equipped for all good works.

In short, to be godly we must BELIEVE and OBEY the entire Word of God.

Realising this, some Christians have put great emphasis on personal Bible Study, and on the importance of doing it each day.

This is good,

It should be encouraged.

But it should never be commanded

- for it is not commanded in Scripture.
- nor is it the way the early church became godly.

There were no printed Bibles, and few handwritten ones.

Many early Christians could not read.

So private Bible study was Unknown:

Yet they still became mighty in the Scriptures!!

- they listened to the apostles. Acts 2:42
- they hearkened to their teachers. Acts 13:1. Ephesians 4:11.
- they were instructed by the elders. 1Timothy 3:2. 5:17.

The key word is TOGETHER.

Their knowledge of the Scriptures was the result of their church life.

So, to be godly, you must BELIEVE and OBEY the entire Word of God.

To do this, you must be part of a church where the WHOLE BIBLE is expounded.

But this is not enough - you must listen to the ministry PROPERLY.

The PROPER hearing of the Word of God

Before hearing

- Sins are to be forsaken. 1 Peter 1:23 - 2:3. James 1:21.
- Wrongs are to be put right. Matthew 5:23-24.
- Prayer is to be made. Psalm 119:18.

During hearing

- Discriminate! 1 Corinthians 14:29. 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22. 1 John 4:1.
- What is OF God, receive as FROM GOD HIMSELF.
Acts 10:33 17:11. 1 Thessalonians 2:13. Hebrews 4:2. James 1:21.
- Work!!
 - Make a disciplined effort to grasp the teaching, so you can progress.
Hebrews 5:11-6:3.

After hearing

You've used your ears - now use your:-

- Eyes. Acts 17:11.
 - Was what you heard entirely Scriptural? LOOK to see
- Head. Hebrews 2:1, Luke 9:44. Psalm 1:2,
 - Deliberately think on what you heard - as if you were still listening.
 - Determine, not to let it slip.
- Heart. Psalm 119:11. Proverbs 2:1.
 - Seek that the Word should become part of you.
 - Hide it in your heart.
- Lips. Luke 24:14. Deuteronomy 6:6-7.
 - Talk about it.
 - Especially amongst your Christian friends; and at home.
- Hands and feet. Deuteronomy 6:8-9. James 1:25,
 - Obey. Bring forth fruit.
 - In keeping of them there is great reward.

10. What must I do to be saved? (part 1).

The answer of the New Testament is - "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shall be saved..."

But this answer will mean nothing to you, unless you realise:-

1. There is a God in heaven.

He is a Spirit. John 4:24.

Infinite in:

In being	Exodus 3:14
Glory	Acts 7:2
Blessedness	1 Timothy 6:15
Perfection	Matthew 5:48.

All-sufficient	Gen 17:1.
Unchangeable	Malachi 3:6. James 1:17.
Incomprehensible	1 Kings 8:27.
Everywhere present	Psalms 139.
Almighty	Revelation 4:8.
Knowing all things	Hebrews 4:13, Psalm 147:5.
Most wise	Romans 16:27
Most holy	Isaiah 6:3
Most just	Deuteronomy 32:4
Most Kind and Good	Exodus 34:6

There is only One living and true God. Deuteronomy 6:4. 1 Corinthians 8:4, 6

Yet there be three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one true eternal God, the same in-substance, equal in power and glory; although distinguished by their, personal properties.

Matthew 3:16-17, 28:19, John 10:30, 2 Corinthians 13 14, 1 John 5:7

A sovereign God	Ephesians 1:4, 11,	Romans 19:22-23, 11:36	
The God of creation	Genesis 1,	Hebrews 11:3,	Proverbs 16:4
The God of providence	Psalms 103:19,	Romans 11:36	
The God of judgement	Ecclesiastes 12:14,	Hebrews 9:27	

"Be still, and KNOW. that I am God". Psalm 46:10 NKJV

2. You have enormously offended Him.

by BREAKING HIS HOLY LAW.-.:

Take the first commandment - "You shall have no other gods before me. Exodus 20:3

This forbids:-

Atheism; idolatry; not having God for your own God; ignorance; forgetfulness; misunderstandings; false opinions; wicked thoughts concerning Him; searching into His Secrets.; profaneness.; hatred of God; self-love; self-advancement; distractions from Him; unbelief; heresy; despair; pride; presumption; wrong zeal; look warmth or deadness in the things of God; apostasy; praying to saints and angels; spiritism; fear of man, or allowing men to rule our consciences; ascribing any gifts or good fortune we have to luck, others, or ourselves etc. etc...

This commands:-

that we own God to be the only true God, and our God; that we worship Him in His appointed way; think on Him; remember Him; adore Him; choose Him; love and desire Him; fear Him; believe and trust Him; hope in Him; delight and rejoice in Him; be zealous' for Him; call upon Him; thank Him; obey Him; seek always to please Him; be sorrowful when He is offended; walk humbly with Him.

- Not only are all these things forbidden and commanded by the plain statement of the 1st commandment, but there are specific Bible verses referring to each one elsewhere.
- This one commandment, alone-shows us that there is no hope except in Christ who was "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners"
- Only when overwhelmed by a knowledge of your sin will you look to such a Saviour,
- This message will be continued next week; but meanwhile the Pastor and other elders are readily available to speak with any person overcome by the knowledge that they are alienated and far from the life of God.

11. What must I do to be saved? (part 2).

The answer of the New Testament is:–

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved..." Acts 16:31

We have seen that this answer will mean nothing to you, unless you realise that:–

- There is a God in heaven.
- You have enormously offended Him

2. You have enormously offended Him.

by BREAKING HIS HOLY' LAW.

Take the fourth commandment:- Exodus 20:8-11.

This commands:-

That you keep holy to God one whole day in seven; that you remember the manner and purpose for which it was set aside; that you recognise that since Christ's resurrection that it is to be the first day of the week; that you keep it as a day of rest and worship, except for acts of necessity and mercy. Those with authority over others are to ensure that they are not hindered from keeping it.

This forbids:-

Coming to the Sabbath unprepared; not doing what we should on that day; keeping it half-heartedly; idleness; unnecessary work and recreation; entertainments and worldly pleasures; unedifying words and thoughts.

Take the fifth commandment:- Exodus 20:13

This commands:-

That you do everything you can to preserve the life of yourself and others; that you oppose all thoughts, passions, temptations and practices which could lead to life being unjustly taken away; that you discourage violence; that you encourage quietness, proper use of food and drink, body, sleep, work, and recreation; that you think and behave with love, meekness and gentleness to others; that you forgive wrongs done to you; that you repay evil with good; that you comfort and support the distressed; and protect and defend the innocent.

This forbids:-

All killing except capital punishment, just war, or in defence; the neglect or taking away of the necessities of life; sinful anger, hate, envy, and desires for revenge; provoking words, oppression, quarrelling, striking wounding; abortion; 'mercy killing!'; and whatever else leads to life being unjustly taken away.

Take the seventh commandment:- Exodus 20:14

This commands:-

PURITY in mind, affections, body, words and behaviour; that we watch over ourselves and others; pure-minded friendships; modest clothing; marriage for those who do not have the gift of remaining single; the Scriptural ordering of married life; avoiding all that will lead to impurity, and standing but against all temptations to uncleanness.

This forbids:-

IMPURITY in all its forms; whether it be in body, mind, affections, words, or behaviour; exposing the ears and eyes to impurity; undue delay of marriage; prohibiting lawful marriages; unjust divorce; vows of a single life; and anything whatever which is likely to lead ourselves or others into impure thoughts and actions.

KNOW THIS:

- You have not kept these commandments.
 - Romans 3:9-19. James 3:10-11.
- You are under God's wrath.
 - Galatians 3:10. Romans 1:18. Psalm 7:11-13
- You must look to the Lord Jesus Christ, and Him alone, and nowhere else, to be Saved.
 - John 14:6. Acts 4:10-12. 1 Peter 2:21-25.

12. What must I do to be saved? (part 3).

The answer of the New Testament is:-

"Believe on the Lord Christ, and you will be saved....." Acts 16:31 NKJV

We have seen that this answer will mean nothing to you, unless you realise that:-

- There is a God in heaven.
- You have enormously offended Him.

Here is GOOD NEWS!

3. In the Lord Jesus Christ there is salvation.

Who He is

- He is the eternal Son of God, of one substance and equal with the Father. John 1:1, 14, 10:30. Philippians 2:6.
- In the fullness of time He became man, with a true body and a reasonable soul. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost in Mary's womb and born of her; and was without sin. Galatians 4:4. Hebrews 4:15, 7:26.
- And so He was, and continues to be, God and man, in two distinct natures, yet One person, forever. Romans 9:5. Colossians 2:9. Hebrews 7:24-25.

What He did

- He was born of a woman, and subjected Himself to the Law, which He perfectly fulfilled, although He received every temptation. Galatians 4:4. Romans 5:19. Hebrews 2:17-18, 4:15.
- Bearing God's wrath, He then laid down His life as an offering for sin, and endured the painful, shameful and cursed death of the cross. Philippians 2:8. Hebrews 12:2. Galatians 3:13.
- He was then buried, and continued under the power of death until the third day. 1 Corinthians 15:3-4. Romans 6:9.

Where He is now

- He did not see the corruption of death. It was impossible for death to hold Him. He rose again, by which act He declared Himself to be the Son of God, and the LORD of the living and the dead. Acts 2:24-27. Romans 1:4, 14:9.
- He presented Himself alive, and then, as a Man, visibly ascended into the highest heavens, where He is at the right hand of God. He has authority over all things in heaven and earth; and is interceding for His people. Acts 2:28. Ephesians 1:22. 1 Peter 3:22. Romans 8:34. Hebrews 9:12, 24.
- Although unjustly judged and condemned by wicked men, He shall come again, gloriously, at the last day, to judge the world in righteousness. Acts 3:14-15. 1 Thessalonians 4:16. Acts 17:31.

4. You must repent of 'your sins and believe in Him.

Repent:

- It is not enough to be sorry or your sins and to confess them.
- you must change your whole outlook, mind, direction, thought.
- you must hate the sins which so enormously offend God. see Psalm 51.
- You must turn from your sins to God. Acts 3:19, 26:20.

There is no forgiveness or salvation for an unrepentant person.

Luke 13:1-5. 24:47. Acts 2:38-39. 3:19. 5:31. 11:18. 26:18. 2 Corinthians 7:10.

Believe:

You must look to the Lord, Jesus Christ, and Him alone, and nowhere else, to be, saved
John 14:6. Acts 4:10-12. 1 Peter 2:21-25. 1 Timothy 2:5

Come to Him as PROPHET.

Only by Him is there any true knowledge of God
John 1:18, 12:45, 14:9. 1 Timothy 2:5. Hebrews 1:3.
By Him, God may be KNOWN.

Come to Him as PRIEST.

Only He has made an acceptable sacrifice for sins by which sinners are reconciled and justified. Hebrews 2:17, 2 Corinthians 5:19-21.
He ever lives to make intercession for those who come to God by Him.
Hebrews 7:25, Romans 8:34.
Through Him, God may be APPROACHED.

Come to Him as KING.

Those who He saves, He rules, protects and supports, working all things for their good; and takes vengeance on the rest who do not obey God or His Gospel...
1 Corinthians 15:25. Romans 8:28. Ephesians 1:22-23. 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9
Because of Him, God may be ENJOYED.

- There is no hope outside of Christ. Ephesians 2:12.
- Those who hear His word and act on it, build safely for time AND eternity.
Matthew 7:24-29.
- Such salvation in Christ is offered to ALL.
John 3:16. Romans 10:9-13. Matthew 11:28-30.

So - "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved..." Acts 16:31 NKJV

13. Are there really such creatures as angels? (part 1)

Human reason can neither prove nor disprove the existence of angels.
But no-one who believes the Word of God doubts that they exist.

Through the centuries there has been much confusion, disagreement and discussion on the whole subject of angels.

This has not been necessary, for the Bible's teaching is plain and clear:-

1. What angels are like

They are creatures. Psalm 148:2, 8. Colossians 1:16.

We do not know precisely when they were made,
except that it was before the seventh day. Exodus 20:11. Nehemiah 9:6.

They are spiritual and without bodies.

For - they are 'pneumata'. Matthew 12:45. Acts 19:12. Hebrews 1:14.
- have no flesh and bones. Luke 24:39.
- do not marry. Matthew 22:30.
- can be present in large numbers in a small space. Luke 8:30.
- and are invisible. Colossians 1:16.

Being creatures, they are finite and limited,
and cannot be in two or more places at the same time.

They are persons, with intelligence and will.

They are intelligent, 2 Samuel 14:20. Ephesians 3:10. 1 Peter 1:12. 2 Peter 2:11
superior in knowledge to us Matthew 24:36
with moral natures, Matthew 25:31, Acts 10:22, 1 Peter 2:4
and power to obey and be led, Hebrews 1:14, Matthew 25:41.

They are either good angels or evil angels.

They were all good to begin with. Genesis 1:31, Jude 1:6

The good angels are known as elect angels, or holy angels. 1 Timothy 5:21, Acts 10:22.

They - look on God's face. Matthew 18:10
- do His will. Matthew 6:10.
- and have immortal life. Luke 20:36.

The evil angels are better known as 'devils' or 'demons'. Matthew 9:32-34.

2. How angels are organised.

Their number is uncountable. Deuteronomy 33:2. Psalm 68:17. Matthew 26:53.
Revelation 5:11.

But the number is the same as when they were created. Matthew 22:30.

Within this vast number there are ranks :-

Cherubim guard paradise, Genesis 3:24.
gaze on the mercy-seat, Exodus 25:18. Hebrews 9:5.
and make up God's chariot Psalm 18:10.
They guard God's holiness

Seraphim surround His throne give Him praise, and wait to obey Him, Isaiah 6.
They prepared Isaiah for a proper approach to God.

Principalities, powers, thrones and dominions, do not appear to be different kinds of angels, but these words appear to be used of different ranks among the angels.

Ephesians 3:10. Colossians 1:16, 2:10. Ephesians 1:21. 1 Peter 3:22.

Gabriel is an angel whose task is to bring and to interpret messages from God.
Daniel 8:16. 9:21. Luke 1:19, 26.

Michael is the archangel, the prince of the angels. He fights for Jehovah against His enemies.
Daniel 10:13, 21. Jude 1:9. Revelation 12:7.

3. What angels do.

Some of their tasks and functions have already been made clear.

They also:-

- Ceaselessly praise God. Isaiah 6. Psalm 103:20. Revelation 5:11.
- rejoice at the conversion of a sinner. Luke 15:10.
- serve believers, and protect them. Hebrews 1:14. Psalm 34:7. Psalm 91:11.
- protect little ones. Matthew 18:10
- are present in the Church 1 Corinthians 11:10, 1 Timothy 5:21
- watch the Church, and learn from it. Ephesians 3:10, 1 Peter 1:12
- carry believers into the bosom of Abraham. Luke 16:22

The effect this teaching should have:-

We should have a greater appreciation of the holiness, glory, power and majesty of God, who is surrounded and praised by such pure and bright creatures.

We should rejoice that God has commanded the angels to serve us and see to our welfare. What kindness!! What providence!!

We should walk more carefully. We are not only watched by the world, but by the angels, to whom God has made us a witness of his manifold wisdom and grace.

14. .Are there really such creatures as angels? (part 2).

Last week we learned what angels are like; how they are organised; what they do.
We also learned that besides the elect angels there are fallen angels, evil angels (demons).
Tonight we must learn more about these evil spirits:-

1. Where they came from.

All the angels were created good. Genesis 1:31.

But some did not remain so, and fell from their original position. 2 Peter 2:4, Jude 1:6.

Their exact sin is not revealed.

But their leader exalted himself over against God; sought supreme authority; was guilty of pride.
(see 1 Timothy 3:6, and the temptation he brought to man in Genesis 3).

2. How they are led.

- They are led by Satan - otherwise called The Devil; Apollyon; Abaddon; Beelzebub; Angel of the Bottomless Pit; Prince of this world; Prince of Darkness; Sinner from the beginning; Accuser; Belial; Deceiver; Dragon; Liar and Murderer; Leviathan; Lucifer; Serpent; Tormentor; God of this world; etc...
- He is the originator of sin, Genesis 3:1, 4. John 8:44. 1 John 3:8, Revelation 12:9.
- He is the head of those who fell away Matthew 25:41. 9:32-24. Ephesians 2:2.
- He controls the world separated from God. John 12:31. 14:30. 16:11, 2 Corinthians 4:4.
- Although he is not divine, nor omnipotent, he has immense power.
However it is limited and he himself is destined to the bottomless pit. Matthew 12:29, Revelation 20:2, 10.

3. What they do.

- Being in revolt against God, they seek to do all that they can against Him, and to destroy His work.
- They afflict men's bodies. Job 2:7. Luke 12:6. Acts 10:38.
- They afflict men's souls, by direct attack, deception, suggestion, persuasion.
- Their aim is to keep men from God and His Truth. 2 Corinthians 4:4, Ephesians 2:2, 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10, 2 Timothy 2:26, 1 John 3:10, Revelation 12:9.
- They tempt men to sin. Genesis 3; 1 Chronicles 21:1. Luke 22:3. Acts 5:3, Matthew 4.
- They pain, harass and oppose God's elect. Luke 22:31, 2 Corinthians 12:7, Ephesians 6:11-12, 1 Thessalonians 2:18
- However, their doom is certain, and they drag their chains with them wherever they go!
2 Peter 2:4. Jude 1:6

It is possible to have your personality ruled by these frightful creatures, with appalling results. So we must mention.

Demon-possession.

This can be sought deliberately.

- the Baal prophets. 1 Kings 18:
- Mediums. Leviticus 20:6, 27
- Witchdoctors.
- Various voodoo rites.
- Clairvoyants, palmists, fortune-tellers etc..

Or can be unsought; with worse results physically.

- Saul. 1 Samuel 16:14, 19:9.
- the cases in the New Testament. Matthew 8:28ff. Mark 6:13. Luke 13:32. etc

= Possession must not be confused with mental illness.

Scripture carefully distinguishes the two. Matthew 4:24. Mark 1:32. Luke 6:17-18.

= Disease and possession were also differently treated, Acts 16:18. Acts 28:8.

= Some possession is continuous (Matthew 9:32, 12:22).

but most is intermittent - the evil spirit 'takes over' the person, obviously and manifestly, from time to time. (1 Samuel 16:14, 23. Mark 9:18).

Therefore..

= Beware of the growing interest in the occult - spiritism; séances; and all attempts to discover the future by supernatural means - horoscopes, fortune-telling, ouija - boards, glass-moving; card-tricks etc...

All these are entrances into the spirit world, and are forbidden by God.

Leviticus 19:31. Deuteronomy 18:9-14. Leviticus 20:6. 27. Exodus 22:18.

= Have nothing to do with false religions, for heathen worship is the worship of demons.

Deuteronomy 32:17. Psalm 106:37. Acts 17:22. 1 Corinthians 10:20

(Note the interest in eastern religions today).

= Do battle with evil in ALL its forms, using the Word of God as a defensive and offensive weapon. Matthew 4:1-11, Ephesians 6:10-20.

= The alternatives are the Holy Spirit or an evil spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:1-3.

So, as a believer do not be over awed by demonic forces, or fear that you may be indwelt or possessed yourself.

= Do not be content to drive out evil without replacing it with what is good and godly.

Matthew 12:44-45.

15. What is the work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament?

Introduction

The Old Testament teaches us much of real value concerning the Spirit.

Yet the really distinctive teaching about the Spirit is in the New Testament.

this is illustrated by Nicodemus. John 3:1-17

- Teaching concerning the Spirit was not new to him.
- But **Jesus'** teaching about the Spirit's work in the New Birth was beyond his understanding.
- He had a foundation.
- But he was a long way from understanding the WHOLE.

this is made clear by John 7:39.

- Up to that time the Spirit had not been given in the fullest sense.
- Nor would He be given until Jesus was glorified.
- The gift of the Spirit is the result of Jesus' work.

So we come to the Old Testament, not to see the whole truth.

But to see the **foundation** on which the complete revelation is built.

The Hebrew word "ruach".

In most ancient languages the words for 'spirit', 'breath' and 'wind' are the same.

This is so in Hebrew.

However "ruach" always contains the note of violent activity, of power. e.g.

- A strong wind. Exodus 10:19, 15:8.
- a bitter spirit. Genesis 26:35(margin).

So when "ruach" is used of God, it means:-

- GOD IN ACTION!
- doing whatever He pleases
- something majestic
- something which mere man cannot resist.
- examples: Isaiah 40:7. 2 Kings 2:16. Ezekiel 3:14.

"Ruach" and God

Without the New Testament we could never rise to the doctrine of the Trinity.

In the Old Testament, "ruach" = GOD IN ACTION.

Yet there are several hints that although the Spirit is God, and **is** God in action; yet He is **separate** from Him.

This foundation prepares us for the New Testament complete revelation.

- See - Isaiah 48:16, 63:10-11 Haggai 2:5, Zechariah 4:6.

The activity of the Spirit in the Old Testament

Creation

Something which GOD DID and in which man was not involved.

So it is attributed to the Spirit.

- Genesis 1:2, Job 26:13, Job 33:4.

Giving of life

Something which GOD DOES in which man cannot possibly have a part.

So it is attributed to the Spirit.

- Genesis 2:7. Ezekiel 37:1-14.

Amongst men

God DOES something for a man, or in a man.

He gives:-

- Strength Judges 13:25, 14:6, 19, 15:14, 16:20.
- Skill Exodus 28:3, 31:3-5,
- Leadership Judges 3:10, 6:34, 11:29, Genesis 41:38, 1 Samuel 16:13.
- Revelation Nehemiah 9:30, Zechariah 7:12. (see 1 Peter 1:10-12).

Holiness

God DOES something in a man, and changes his whole heart, life and outlook.

- Power to denounce evil. Micah 3:8
- Power to walk with God. Psalm 51:11, 143:10.

A future outpouring

Yet the Old Testament recognises that "the best is yet to be".

They knew that they had not seen all of the Spirit's activity.

They looked to the future, when God would WORK in a new way.

He would pour out His Spirit beyond their expectations:-

- Isaiah 44:3-5,
- Ezekiel 36:25-27,
- Joel 2:28-32

And this future work of the Spirit shall be associated with God's promised Messiah - the Christ:-

- Isaiah 11:1-3
- 59:20-21
- 61:1ff

The Spirit of the Old Testament is the Spirit of Christ !!

16. GOD (Who Is He?) - as taught in 1 Peter

This letter to persecuted Christians is full of incidental references to God.
We look at these - to clarify what needs saying to pressurised believers
- to check whether we hold to the apostolic faith.

God the' Father.

He is the One true God, and the 1st person of the Trinity. 1:3, 2:17, 1:2-3.
His redeemed people may call Him 'Father', but He is also Judge. 1:17.
He is FOR some people, but AGAINST others. 3:12, 5:5.
Therefore His people should submit to Him, and expect vindication in due time. 5:6.

God is the author of His people's salvation, and so is to be blessed. 1:3.
This salvation was planned by Him in eternity. 1:2. 20.
It was accomplished in time, and so we have a solid hope. 1:3. 21.

God's will for His saved people is obedience. 1:2, 4:2, 2:16.
He lays great value on conduct which pleases Him. 2:20. 3:4.

He is a God of holiness, mercy, grace and longsuffering. 1:15-16, 1:3, 5:10, 3:20.
His word lives and abides. 1:23, 25.
He is therefore, rightly, to be revered and feared. 1:17, 2:17.
His people are to live differently, trusting Him who cares. 2:19. 1:21. 5:7, 10-11.

Here He leads His people through trials. 3:17, 4:19.
But those are only for their good. 1:6-7, 5:10.
This should govern their attitude in trial. 4:19, 2:23.

God the Son.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Lord of the Church. 1:3.
He was foreordained to redeem His people with His blood. 1:18-20.
Before He came His Spirit bore witness to this through the prophets. 1:10-11.

What was eternally planned has now been historically fulfilled. 1:20, 4:1, 3:18.
His death was atoning, redeeming and reconciling. 1:18-19, 2:24, 3:18.
God set His seal on this by raising Him and giving Him glory. 1:3, 21.
He is now exalted over all. 3:22.
This same glorious Jesus is yet to be unveiled and openly manifested, 1:7, 4:13.

In the meantime His people love Him and commune with Him. 1:8.
They enjoy the indwelling presence of His Spirit. 4:14.
They are vitally united to Him, acceptable to God by Him, and ministered to by Him. 2:3-5, 25.

Christ has left His people an example to follow, as to what should be the
course and character of their lives. 2:20-23. 4:19,

As with Him, earthly suffering and heavenly glory are theirs. 1:11. 4:13. 5:10.

Yet the eternal Son of God, an endless blessing to some, is an offence to others.
Because of their rebellious self-will He will be to them a cause for judgement,
and their final undoing. 2:3, 7-8.

17. WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHRISTIAN - as taught in 1 Peter.

This letter contains very clear teaching on what it means to be a Christian. Christians are people:-

Saved by grace.

They belong to God because of His eternal choice. 1:2, 2:9.

And because of Christ's redemptive work in history. 1:18-20.

They have faith and hope through His resurrection and exaltation. 1:3, 21

The Gospel has been preached to them in the power of the Spirit. 1:12, 25.

Their response has been testified in baptism. 3:21.

They are a people forgiven, purified, born-again. 2:24, 1:22-23.

The Spirit actively sanctifies them, and they live unto righteousness. 1:2, 2:24.

They are truly God's own people, whom He is causing to grow in grace. 2:10, 5:10.

Bound for heaven.

God's purposes for His people are not finally realised here.

They are called into His eternal glory, to an unfading inheritance. 5:10, 1:4.

Their salvation is yet to be openly manifested. 1:5.

God keeps them until then by means of their faith. 1:5.

Having tasted how gracious He is, they must sustain their hope to the end. 2:3, 1:13

The prospect of heaven should cause them to constantly rejoice. 1:6,8.

They should live in the light of the impending consummation. 4:7. Suffering and faithfulness now will, at last, be rewarded. 4:13, 5:4.

Their persevering to the end will bring praise and honour to the Saviour. 1:7

Obviously different.

They have come to Christ individually, to believe in Him. 2:4-7.

Out of darkness into His marvellous light. 2:9.

To acknowledge Christ as Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. 2:25.

Having obeyed the truth, and having experienced cleansing- 1:22-23.

Their lives now consist of ceasing from sin, and becoming holy. 2:24. 4:1-2.

The Father's holiness and the Son's redemption oblige them to be different. 1:14-19.

Being born of God, they must put away ungodliness. 1:23, 2:1.

Fleshly lusts are to be forsaken, and good is to be done. 2:11, 3:11

This includes love and service to fellow—believers. 1:22, 5:5.

Civil, social and family responsibilities are to be faithfully discharged 2:13-3:7. Peace is to be sought, and pursued. 3:10-12.

Conduct is not to be governed by the conduct of others. 4:19, 3:9.

Alertness, sobriety and prayer are essential. 1:13, 4:7, 5:6-9.

Suffering is inevitable, both for conscience and for Christ's sake. 2:19, 4:13-16. When called to face it, Christ's example is to be remembered, and His steps followed. 2:21.

Joined as a body.

Although scattered, believers have a common election and a common Lord. 1:1-3.

They are, thus, a brotherhood. 2:17, 5:9.

They are united to each other, being united to Christ. 2:4-6, 9-10, 5:14.

They should recognise this, and love as brothers. 1:22, 2:17. 3:8. 4:8.

As well as exhibiting many similar qualities. 3:8, 4:8-11.

They should look upon themselves as God's flock. 5:2.

Of which Christ is the Shepherd and Bishop. 2:25.

But He pastors His flock through under—shepherds, who are to do their work in a Christ like way. 5:1-4.

18. Questions about becoming a Christian

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

A Christian is someone whose sins have been forgiven by God, and who knows Jesus Christ personally as his or her Friend and King.

IS THERE A COST INVOLVED IN BECOMING A CHRISTIAN ?

We cannot buy forgiveness of sins. It is a free gift of God.
But if you become a Christian it means that in the future Christ must be your King.
He will tell you to give up some things which you have done all your life.
He will tell you to do other things which you have never done before.
People may laugh at you for being a Christian. All this is not easy. Some of it is very hard.
This is the cost of being a friend and follower of Jesus Christ.

HOW DO I KNOW THAT CHRIST WILL ACCEPT ME ?

Question :- DO I HAVE TO FEEL ANYTHING BEFORE I CAN ASK GOD TO SAVE ME ?

Answer :- No!

Question :- AM I TOO SINFUL TO BE SAVED ?

Answer :- No!

The answer to these questions and all questions like them is that Christ is ready to receive anybody. Whoever you are, whatever you have done, whatever you feel, Jesus invites you, just as you are, to come to Him and be saved. You

don't have to come to Jesus pretending that you are a better person than you really are. Christ knows you better than you know yourself, and He has said: He that comes to me I will never, never, cast out.' (John 6 vs 37)

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED ?

In becoming a Christian a person must repent of their sin and believe and trust in Jesus Christ to save them.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO REPENT OF SIN ?

Without Christ we are all sinful people and are always doing things which make God angry. We willingly go the way of sin. To repent is to turn round and go the other way. It means to hate sin and to seek to finish with it so as to please God.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BELIEVE IN CHRIST ?

You must believe that Jesus is the Lord, and that He is able to save people from their sins. Then you must put your trust in Him to save you. How do you know if you have put your trust in him? When you trust someone, you listen to them and do what they say. So it is when we trust Jesus.

I FEEL TOO WEAK TO REPENT AND TRUST JESUS; I WOULD GIVE UP TOO EASILY; WHAT CAN I DO?

None of us by ourselves have the strength and will power to repent and believe. We are all weak. But God is all-powerful. We must turn from our sin, but we must ask God to make us truly turn from it. We must put our trust in Christ, but ask God to make it real trust. God is able even to make us truly repent and believe. He is able to keep us walking with Him in the future.

CAN ANYONE ELSE SPEAK TO GOD FOR ME?

Other people can pray for you. But no-one else can make a Christian. Becoming a Christian is something between you and Jesus Christ. It has nothing directly to do with anyone else. Are you sorry for sin and do you want to finish with it ruling your life? Do you want to know Christ as your Friend and King? Then you should find somewhere, where you can be alone, and there pray to God and ask Him to save you.

WHAT SHALL I SAY TO GOD WHEN I PRAY?

God is not interested in fine words and speeches. But He will listen to anyone who is sincerely seeking Him, whatever words they use. As you pray you should :-

Confess your sins to God.

Confess that these sins are wicked in God's sight and you deserve to be sent to Hell for them.

Tell God that you have no power to save yourself.

Ask Jesus to help you repent and believe. Ask Him to save you.

Tell Jesus that you want Him as the King of your life.

Ask God to hear your prayers because of Jesus Christ.

WHAT SHOULD I DO NEXT ?

The next thing which you must do as soon as possible is to go and tell a Christian friend what you have done. If you have no friends who are Christians, you should try to find a church which believes the Bible and tell them. It is very important that you find Christian fellowship as soon as possible.

'Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.'

(Isaiah 45 v.22)

Getting right with God

The message of the Bible starts with God. What is God like?

1. *God is the Creator of the world and of each person in it.* Therefore, because God has made us, we are his property for him to do as he likes with.
2. *God is invisible to our eyes.* Without us realising it, God is in every place, and there is nothing you can hide from him. He sees even into our minds and knows us better than we know ourselves.
3. *God is holy.* What does that mean? It means simply that God is good and to be deeply respected. God is pure and he hates evil. The Bible says that God's holiness is light in which there is no darkness at all.
4. *The all-knowing, holy creator God is also a God of love.* We, as people, usually love the people that love us. But the love of God is something far beyond our love. Every day God actively loves and does good to people who are his bitter enemies.

What sin is

The second point the Bible makes is that God has given men a law to live by. This law is for our own good. This is God's law summed up:

1. We may worship no one else but the true God.
2. We should not have wrong thoughts about God. This idolatry.
3. We must not use the name of God irreverently or as a swear word.
4. We must keep the Sabbath day as a holy day set apart for God.
5. We must honour our fathers and mothers and obey them.
6. We must not murder, either really or in our minds.
7. Nor must we commit adultery, either really or in our minds.
8. We must not steal.
9. We must not lie.
10. We must not covet other people's possessions.

Sin is the breaking of this law. There is nothing bad in the law and there is nothing good that is left out of the law.

Now as we read this law we all realise something terrible. None of us have kept this law and, if we are honest, we don't even want to keep it. Why? God says it is because we have sinful hearts. When we break God's law we spit in God's face. God is not hard. God is not malicious. God is slow to get angry. But our sinful hearts and the sinful things we do are so bad that God is terribly angry with people. What is the outcome of this? The outcome is that God is angry with people now, and unless we can somehow be saved, after we die we will be sent to hell and experience God's terrible wrath forever.

What Jesus did

Everyone is under God's curse for being sinful. but God who is very kind, has not left it there. Nearly 2,000 years ago God became a man. He was known as Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus lived a perfect life. He fully kept the law in every way. Jesus spent the three years before he was crucified going about telling people to believe in him and follow him. Why?

Because God had a plan in all this to save people. Jesus Christ was going to take the punishment due to other people for their sins.

Jesus was going to die in place of all those people who those people who put their trust in him. When Jesus died on the cross, he did not just Suffer like other men dying by crucifixion. The wrath of God came down in all its force upon Jesus and he paid the price of sin. God showed that he had accepted the death of Jesus in the place of other people by raising him from the dead after three days.

So for people who trust him, Jesus has taken away their sins. But that is not all he does. When someone believes in Jesus, the perfect life lived by Jesus is reckoned by God to belong to that person. A mysterious exchange has taken place. On the cross Jesus was reckoned by God to be as sinful as you and me, and God's wrath fell on him. But the person trusting Christ is reckoned by God to be as perfect and good as Jesus. This is how it is possible for people to be put right with God.

How can I be saved ?

Will I be saved if I try to live a good life? No!

Will I be saved if I promise God I'll do better? No!

How can I be saved then? There is only one way to be saved. That is by turning from your sins and trusting Jesus Christ to save you.

How can I turn from my sin and trust God? None of us by ourselves have the power to turn from our sin and do good. If we had that power, we could have kept God's law in the first place. Only God can make you able to give up your sins and believe in Jesus. But if you go to God on your own in prayer, and confess your sins to him, and tell him you want to turn from your sins and that you want to believe in Jesus Christ and be saved, then God will give you the power. He will save you.

Jesus said:

'Come unto me all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'

19. How important is it to belong to a local church?

We have seen what the true church of Christ is:-

- A company of people. The Father chose them. The Son died for them. The Holy Spirit works in them. This company of people is highly privileged.
- They are Christ's Body, Building and Bride. God is on their side, and they are bound for glory!
- So the church belongs to God, not men. Only God knows exactly who its members are. Only He can add to the true church, and it possesses a unity which He has given it

Look at the New Testament pattern!

- as the Gospel spread, all the members of the true church in any one spot gathered into worshipping groups, or local churches. Acts 13:1. 14:23. 15:41. 20:17. Revelation 1:11.
- most of the New Testament letters are written to such local churches and the apostles took it for granted that believers would join in such fellowships. 1 Corinthians 1:2, 14:23, 2 Corinthians 1:1.
- when Paul was converted, his first act in each new town was to join up with the disciples there. Acts 9:19, 26.
- the Word of God commands us to follow this pattern. Hebrews 10:25,
- We should meet with the Christians where we live It is a command - not an optional extra!

It makes fellowship possible.

- we are expected to have fellowship ('a shared life') with one another. This is impossible if we are not part and parcel of the local company of Christians. Hebrews 3:13. 10:24. Acts 2:42.
- we have responsibilities to one another. Most of God's commands in this direction cannot be kept, unless we are closely associating with the local church. Galatians 6:1-2.10. Ephesians 4:2-3. Hebrews 13:15-17. 1 Corinthians 16:2. Philippians 2:1-2. etc..

It makes Christian growth possible.

Instruction

- a church is to have elders over it, and if it does not it is defective It is the duty of these elders to rule the church, and also to feed and nurture it, teaching it the Word of God.
- Some elders are to be supported by the church's gifts, so that they can more fully give themselves to ministering God's Word.
- A believer not part of a local church cuts himself off from all this. Acts 14:22-23. Acts 20:28-35. Ephesians 4:11-16. 1 Timothy 5:17. 3:1-9. Titus 1:5.

Discipline

- Christ does not rule believers in an airy-fairy way, but through the local church officers which He has appointed. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13. Hebrews 13:7, 17, 1 Timothy 5:17, 1 Peter 5:1-5.
- Controversies must be settled, and some members sternly dealt with.
- This can only be done within the local congregation. Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 5,
- A believer who is not part of a local church is in open rebellion against the Lordship of Christ.

It makes evangelism possible.

For the local church, and ONLY the local church, is God's appointed means of spreading the Gospel. to be saved and to be added to the church are one and the same thing.

Acts 2:42-47 Local believers witnessed. Converts were added to them.

a local church may affect its own area, and also a much wider sphere. 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 8.

missionaries to regions beyond are commissioned by God through the local churches to which they belong. Acts 13:1-3, 14, 27-28. 16:1-3.

<u>Therefore</u>	do not despise the local church of Christ	1 Corinthians 11:22.
	but do everything in your power to build it up	1 Corinthians 14:12.

20. How should we listen to Gods Word?

Luke 8:18. "Take heed therefore HOW you hear".

- Here is our Lord talking to His disciples. 9.
- He is talking about how His Word is to be heard.
- He is not framing a suggestion, but giving a SOLEMN COMMAND.

1. Is this command obeyed today?

- No! there are very, very few believers who take heed as to HOW they listen to the Word of God.
- No! the vast majority take no steps whatever to ensure that they hear the Word aright They are not alert to this question of right hearing - as their Saturday-night and Sunday habits prove.

2. WHY is this command to be obeyed?

1. It is a command of the Son of God - our Creator and Judge. John 1:3, Acts 17:31.
That should be enough!
2. Not to obey is not to believe. Romans 1:5. Hebrews 5:9.
3. Not to obey Christ is not to love Him. John 14:23-24.

Those are general Scriptural principles. But look at the context:-

- **The Parable of the Sower 4-15**

- This shows that it is HOW a person hears the Word of Cod which marks him out as a true believer or not.

- **The immediate context 16-18**

- This shows:
 - 16. The Word of God is not for covering, but showing. Those who don't hear aright cannot shine aright!
 - 17. All secrets will be revealed. Hear aright and you will BE right - and need not fear such an exposure.
 - 18. Those who receive the Word - gain. Those who don't - lose everything.

Make every effort to hear aright!

Take heed HOW you hear!

3. HOW is this command to be obeyed?

The Scriptures give clear instruction on this point.

Before hearing

- Sins are to be forsaken. 1 Peter 1:23 — 2:2. James 1:21.
- Wrongs are to be put right. Matthew 5:23-24.
- Prayer is to be made. Psalm 119:18.

During hearing

- Discriminate! 1 Corinthians 14:29, 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22, 1 John 4:1.
- What is OF God receive as FROM GOD HIMSELF.
 - Acts 10:33, 17:11. 1 Thessalonians 2:13. Hebrews 4:2, James 1:21.
- Work!
 - Make a disciplined effort to grasp the teaching, so you can progress. Hebrews 5:11 - 6:3

After hearing.

You've used your ears. Now use your:—

- Eyes. Acts 17:11.
 - Was what you heard entirely Scriptural? LOOK to see.
- Head. Heb 2:1, Luke 9:44.
 - Deliberately think on what you heard — as if you were still listening.
 - Determine not to let it slip.
- Heart. Psalm 119:11, Proverbs 2:1.
 - Seek that the Word should become part of you.
 - Hide it in your heart.
- Lips. Luke 24:14, Deut
 - Talk about it.
 - Especially amongst your Christian friends; and at home.
- Hands and feet. Deuteronomy 6:8-9, James 1:25.
 - Obey. Bring forth fruit.
 - In keeping of then there is great reward:

21. Should We Tithe? “Will a man rob God? ... Bring ye ALL the tithes...” Malachi 3:8-12.

God was proving to His people that they were backsliding.
One of the proofs was their failure to tithe.
Because of this, God had cursed them (9).

Should **we** tithe?

1. Tithing is right.

It is unthinkable that a believer should give less than one-tenth, of his income to God.

- The Old Testament commanded it. Leviticus 27: 30-34, Nehemiah 13:10-12, 2 Chronicles 31:6, Malachi 3:8-12.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ approved it. Matthew 23:23.
- The apostles implied it.
 - The apostles do not actually mention tithing.
 - Here is some of Paul's teaching about giving.
 - Could a person give less than a tithe, and still live up to this?
 - Giving is to be done:-
 - Voluntarily 2 Corinthians 8:7-15, 9:7
 - Thoughtfully 2 Corinthians 9:7
 - Cheerfully 2 Corinthians 9:7
 - Regularly 1 Corinthians 16:2
 - Proportionately 1 Corinthians 16:4, 2 Corinthians 8:14, Romans 12:8.
- No upward limit is mentioned.
- Could a grateful Christian give less than the Old Testament demand?

2. Tithing is rewarding.

- It causes God's blessing to come on other areas of our lives. Deuteronomy 14:28-29.
- It is linked with the uncontainable blessing of God's people. Malachi 3:8-12.

- It is the way to avoid being in want! Proverbs 2:9-10, 11:24, 2 Corinthians 9:6, 8,
- It causes thanksgivings to arise to God. 2 Corinthians 9:11-12.

3. Tithing is restricted.

A believer is at liberty to use his money for good causes, but his responsibility to give is restricted to two areas, and this is obviously where his tithe should go.

1. The godly poor.
 - a. 1 Timothy 5:4-13, Acts 6:1, 1 Corinthians 16:1-3, 2 Corinthians 8 and 9,
 - b. James 2:15, 1 John 3:16-18.
2. Those who labour in the Gospel.
 - a. 1 Corinthians 9:7-14, 1 Timothy 5:17-18,
 - b. 2 Corinthians 11:7-9, Philippians 4:10-18,

In our 20th century there are other legitimate expenses (for example, a building where the church gathers entails expense. To give money to it is part of our own ministry of hospitality, and can also be justified by both 'a' and 'b')

But the main principle is that money is to be given to the LORD, for use by PERSONS.

"It is more blessed to give than to receive" Acts 20:35.

22. What is Evangelism?

A lot of Christian activity claims to be 'evangelism', and we are seriously urged to support it. But IT IS 'evangelism'? Tonight we are going to try and make a definition of 'evangelism' from the pages of God's Word.

- "Evangelism" is a word which is never used in the Bible!
- This tells us something right away. The New Testament Christians had no separate activity called 'evangelism'.
- We would be wiser not to use the word; but if we do, we must at least be clear what we mean by it.
- Let us look at the words the New Testament DOES use, and then draw up our definition of 'evangelism' with that in mind.

"Evangel"

This word is used 70 times in the New Testament. It is a word which described the CONTENT of the message which the early Christians spread.

- They did not choose the content. It was revealed by God. Galatians 1:11-12.
- It is truth. Ephesians 1:13.
- It is a holy trust, and not to be tampered with. 1 Timothy 1:11
- Unbelieving men are blind to it. 2 Corinthians 4:3-4.
- But some receive it by faith. Hebrews 4:2.
- It is the power of God unto salvation, and reveals how a sinner may be put right with His God. Romans 1:16-17.

Its chief features are set out in Romans, Galatians and Hebrews.

- Its chief words are, God, man, law, sin, righteousness, repentance and faith.
- It sets forth Jesus Christ as:- Lord, Mediator of the New Covenant, Prophet; priest and King.

It:-

- parades the privileges of believers.
- and tells them of their solemn responsibility to live a holy life within the fellowship, and under the discipline, of the local church.
- Nothing which does not do full justice to this Evangel which is revealed in the Scriptures should be termed "evangelism".
- 'Evangelism' must be 'EVANGEL-ism'! Or it is nothing.

Does the evangelism you support measure up to this standard (God's standard)?

If NOT - know this; you are supporting what God does not support.'

"Evangelise"

This refers to what is DONE with the Evangel; it is the word used to describe HOW the early Christians spread the Evangel.

- It always means THE SETTING FORTH OF THE EVANGEL BY MEANS OF THE SPOKEN WORD, and has no other meaning.
- In the A.V. the word 'preach' usually translates the word 'evangelise'. See Acts 5:42, 8:35, 14:7, 17:18. 1 Corinthians 1:17,9:16, 15:1-2. Hebrews 4:2. 1 Peter 1:12-25.
- If our modern word 'evangelism' means anything it means 'the act of evangelising'. This means that we have no right to call anything 'evangelism' unless it is a setting forth of the Evangel by the SPOKEN WORD.

Can you see what this means?:-

- An area is not evangelised if it has just been flooded with printed tracts, and nothing more.
- But it HAS been evangelised if the Word has been spoken to all there - whether they respond or not.'
- The speaking of the Word is what constitutes evangelism. So a meeting is not made MORE evangelistic by - the personality of the preacher; special singing; testimonies.
- In fact true evangelism does not require any particular time, place, organisation or format - just so long as it is the SPEAKING OF THE WORD. In the early church EVERY believer did it ALWAYS.
 - They were constrained by Christ's love I Corinthians 9:16
 - They bathed the message in prayer. Ephesians 6:18.
 - They spoke the Word in all sorts of places, Acts 2:14, 8:35, 10:24, 16:32.
 - They made no attempt to prove or dress up the message. 1 Corinthians Chapters 1 and 2.
 - Filled with the Spirit they steered clear of both the extreme of empty activism; and the extreme of blasphemous idleness.

A closing definition

"Evangelism is the relating of the Evangel, by means of the spoken Word, and in the power of the Holy Spirit - in order that men may seek God, repent of their sins, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved; and then order the whole of their lives by His Word".

- The threads we have spun together support this definition.
- To give our energies to anything else, and to anything less, is to disobey Christ's Great Commission to us.

23. Why is the Charismatic Movement - An Error to Avoid?

All over the world, and in churches of all denominations (even Roman Catholic), there are those who are claiming that God has restored to the churches the 'charismata - or miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. As young Christians you are certain to be troubled by this error sooner or later.

The Charismatic movement is NOT of God:-

1. It does not preach the New Testament Gospel of God, man, law, sin, repentance and faith - glorying in the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ; setting Him forth as Prophet, Priest and King; and teaching that the benefits He brings are justification, sanctification and adoption. IF it was the revival that it claims to be, it would be true to God's Word.

It urges believers to 'be baptised with the Holy Spirit' in order to enjoy the charismata; and often links this experience with greater holiness or power. It is wicked to urge upon people something which GOD does not urge - for in the New Testament there is NO command to be baptised in the Holy Spirit. This is because the baptism in the Holy Spirit is the New Birth - something which every believer ALREADY has. An examination of the term will quickly prove this.

Today we have insufficient time to go into detail.
But three things about the charismata need saying:-

1. Having miraculous gifts IN NO WAY makes a person a superior Christian.

- In fact it is possible to do miracles in the name of Christ, and not be a Christian at all! Matthew 7:20-23.
- No spiritual gift was missing in the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 1:7), and yet they were still 'babes in Christ' and 'yet carnal' (3:1-3).
- In Ephesians 5:18 and onwards, Paul points out that when people are filled with the Spirit, the proof lies in changed character (the moral and ethical realm), not in miraculous manifestations.
- Elders and deacons have to be men of superior spirituality, but in the list of qualities expected of them, no mention is made of it being necessary for them to possess charismata. 1 Timothy 3:2-13, Titus 1:5-9.
- The charismata weren't as important to the early Christians as they are to some modern ones: And no-one seems to have been upset when they disappeared.

2. In fact, God has withdrawn the charismata from the Church.

After the New Testament age the charismata disappeared speedily and completely.
It is a fact of history.

they disappeared so completely that to this day we do not know exactly what they were.

some folk claim that they have been restored to the Church, but there is no certainty that what are claimed to be modern-day charismata are anything like those experienced by New Testament Christians.

the charismata were God's gift for the time of the Church's infancy. They did not last long – and this must be because God did not intend them to last long. (He is Sovereign).

This should not surprise us. Once we understand why the charismata were given, it is exactly what we would expect.

- they were given to prove that the Apostles were messengers from God. Authentication
- that's why all Bible miracles were given.
- The charismata were not given to establish the church, or even primarily to build it up.
- the charismata were not seen, except where an Apostle had ministered - see especially Acts 8:14-17.
- they were the sign to the world that a new era had begun. Romans 15:19, 2 Corinthians 12:12. Hebrews 2:3-4.

This is why the Scriptures contain NO command for us to seek the charismata.

- we are told to seek God; His kingdom; righteousness; and even the best gifts (pneumatikon) - but never the charismata:
- people who tell us to seek for supernatural manifestations are urging something which God Himself does not urge. This is wicked.

3. Some gifts are gone. Some remain.

- It is the Spirit Himself who chooses what gifts we are to have. 1 Corinthians 12:11.
- Every believer is given a gift. 1 Corinthians 12:6-7.
- Believers do not all receive the same gift. 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 29-30. Romans 12:4-6.
- Some gifts are more important than others. 1 Corinthians 12:28, 14:5, 19.
- As a church, the gift we should want above all others is prophecy. 1 Corinthians 14:1 - but see Revelation 19:10.

What to do:-

Exercise great caution when miracles are claimed, especially in the light of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12.

Seek to find out in what ways God has gifted you, and labour to become useful and edifying members of this local church.

Do everything possible to encourage holiness, righteousness, and godly living.

In every way possible, encourage those who appear to have gifts in the public ministry-of the Word of God. Ephesians 4:1-16.

Let nothing stop us from obeying the Great Commission. Matthew 28:18-20.