

LESSON 22

GREAT BIBLE THEMES

GOD'S POWER TO BLESS AND SAVE

In previous lessons we have called attention to the fact that God's one great purpose in making plans for man's welfare was to help him to be better through the influence of his words. The churches of Galatia were being disturbed about whether or not they should keep the old law with its ordinances. To them Paul wrote (Galatians 6:15), "For in Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a _____." Notice Paul wanted these Christian people to know that God was not interested in the ordinances of the old law, but He wanted His people to be different from what they would be without Christ. He wanted them to be new creatures.

This leads us to the questions for today which serve as an outline for our study.

1. We recognize the need today for some power to change people for the better. What is the power God uses for this purpose? Explain what you mean by your answer.
2. Write a paragraph about the change in the attitude of John the apostle. What caused the change?
3. Contrast the lives of the members of the church at Corinth before they became Christians with their lives as Christians. What power brought about this change?

4. Tell in your own words, of the change in the life of Onesimus.

5. Are Christian people encouraged to continue to be made better? If so, how may we be transformed?

LET US LOOK TO THE BIBLE FOR OUR ANSWERS

Many years ago, Paul was in the midst of a great work preaching and establishing congregations. He came to know of the work of the church in the capital city of the Roman empire. He wrote them a letter in which he emphasized the power of God. Romans 1:16 has been taken as the text for many sermons. It says, "For I am not ashamed of the _____; for it is the _____ of _____ unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Thus we want to notice that God's power to bless and save is to be found in the gospel. We are told that the same root word from we get "power", also gives us such terms as dynamite and dynamo. God's power, or dynamite, or dynamo to bless is through His gospel. With this thought in mind we want to consider several examples of this power in the lives of people.

On one occasion during the personal ministry of Christ, He and His disciples were passing through Samaria on their way to Jerusalem. The people of one village did not receive Christ like some of His disciples thought they should. Notice the attitude they expressed toward the village. Luke 9:54-56, "And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we _____, even as Elias did: But He

turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to _____/_____.” How would you characterize the spirit these disciples manifested on this occasion? Was it one of love and forgiveness, or one of vengeance? It was one of retaliation, they seemed to think that they had not been treated right, so they would get even by destroying them by fire from heaven. The amazing thing about the life of one of the two who wanted to get even is that the world does not know him as a man of vengeance, but to the contrary, as a man of love and forgiveness.

Many years later John wrote several books that are in the New Testament. Let us notice a few statements from them. 1 John 3:18, “My _____, let us not _____, neither in tongue; but in _____.” 1 John 4:7, “Beloved, let us _____: for _____ is of God; and everyone that _____ is born of God, and knoweth God.” 1 John 4:11, “Beloved, if God so _____, we ought also _____.” Many other references could be given showing why John is thought of as the apostle of love. How would you explain the power that changed him from a man of unmerciful retaliation to one of forgiveness and love? Would you say his whole outlook on life had been changed? It was truly the influence of Jesus on his life that made the difference. Can you name another power that can accomplish such a change in an individual?

Another outstanding example of the power of the gospel to change the lives of people is to be found in the short book of Philemon. The chief purpose for writing this letter is given in verse ten. "I beseech thee for _____, whom I have _____, whom I have _____." Paul was in prison in Rome. Onesimus was the runaway slave of Philemon who lived in Colosse. He had gone to Rome and there he had heard Paul proclaim the gospel of Christ. This gospel was a powerful influence in his life. Notice the two pictures of what Onesimus was and what he became. This is found in the next verse. "Which in time past was to thee _____, but now _____ to _____ and to _____." Did you get the force of this illustration? A man who was unprofitable and worthless was later found to be altogether different. He had become profitable. He had been a worthless slave, but now he is a brother beloved in the Lord. What made the change?

Is there a great need for such a remarkable power and influence in the lives of people today? How would you set out to make something worthwhile out of a worthless life? This example gives an illustration of God's power to do that very thing. Men have tried many ways to make people better, and some of these have met with a measure of success, but God's way is far superior to man's way.

The world is faced with many problems today. Where can we find a way to solve them? The statesmen discuss various plans, the economists devise various schemes for world betterment, but the humble Christian has the greatest solution of all because he sees in the gospel of Christ a power to transform and make better. What other power can you name that can reach into a

man’s heart and remake his life after a noble pattern? We need this power in each of our own lives to help remove the impurities there. The song writer has said, “His power can make you what you ought to be.”

For our next illustration we want to look at the list of grievous sins mentioned in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither _____, nor _____, nor _____, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor _____, nor _____, nor _____, nor _____, nor _____, nor _____, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” This list includes sins against one’s body, against his fellow man, and against God. Those who are guilty of such things cannot expect to inherit the blessings of the kingdom of God. Notice the remarkable story to be found in the next words. “And _____ : _____ / _____ / _____ / _____ / _____ / _____ / _____ / _____.”

Does this mean that some of the Christian people to whom Paul was writing had been guilty of adultery, of stealing, of drunkenness, of extorting things from others, and of many other grievous sins? Are they at the time of this writing children of God, who have been called to be saints, in whose lives these sins are no longer to be found.

A great transformation had taken place. Our question is: What power brought about this marvelous change in their lives? The

record of what had happened is very simply told in the last part of Acts 18:8, “. . . and many of the _____ _____ _____, and _____ _____.” The power of God had wrought this change in their lives. Now let us look back to 1 Corinthians 6:11 to see the terms used in this verse to describe this change. “And such were some of you: but ye are _____, but ye are _____, but ye are _____ in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

Paul discusses the power of the gospel to give life in the first part of Ephesians 2. As we read these verses we should keep in mind the meaning of the words “quicken” and “conversation”. The former means “to make alive”, and the latter term refers to their “manner of life”. Now notice the contrast set forth in these verses. “And you hath he _____, who were _____ _____; Wherein _____ ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also _____ _____ in the _____, fulfilling the _____ of the _____ and of the _____; and were by nature the _____ of _____, even as others.” In this passage Paul used the expression “in time past” twice. His purpose was to contrast such times with the changed conditions that were brought about by the gospel. Notice the expressions used to describe their condition “in time past”. They were, “dead in _____ and _____.” They walked “according to the _____.”

They lived according to the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling “the desires of the _____ and of the _____.” Do the last three words in this reference mean that the Christians to whom Paul was writing had been just like other people in their sinful living before becoming followers of Christ? Did he identify himself with those who had so lived? In this former condition they had been separated from God and were dead in their sins, but now a change had taken place. They had been quickened or made alive through the power of God through the gospel.

In the obedience to the gospel our sins are forgiven, we become children of God, and should be different than what we would otherwise be. We should walk in newness of life. Here is our question at this point. Is transformation a process that is completed in our obedience or is it a continuing process? If it is a continuing process, by what means is it carried on? Let us look to Romans 12:2 with these questions in mind. Remember, this was written to Christian people. “And be not conformed to this world; but be ye _____ by the _____ _____, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Did Paul then think of transformation as a continuing process or as one that is completed at the time of obedience to the gospel? Were they to be transformed by the renewing of their minds? To have our mind renewed means that we have our attention called to something we had already known. Does this passage teach that there is value to being reminded of the things we have known before? Are we to be transformed by renewing our mind? Suppose our minds are not renewed, would we expect to grow and to be transformed as we should?

Notice 2 Peter 1:12, “Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in _____ in _____

_____, though ye _____,
and be established in the present truth.” The writer continues
this thought in the next three verses also. Notice what Paul told
Timothy about his duty as a minister. 1 Timothy 4:6, “If thou
_____ of these things, thou shalt be a _____
_____ of Jesus Christ.” We should treasure every
influence that can come to us that will make us better. Can you
name a greater influence than the Word of God?

As we see some of the needs of the sin-sick world that has
forgotten its Creator, let us remember that the greatest possible
power that is available to us in making it better is the gospel of
our Lord. Isaiah 1:18, “Come now, let us reason together saith
the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as
snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

TEST

1. (a) Our conscience, (b) the church of my choice, (c) the gospel of Christ, (d) every sermon preached, is the power of God unto salvation. _____
2. The apostle John, who is known for his writings about love, once showed during his life the attitude of vengeance and retaliation. (True or False) _____
3. (a) James, (b) Onesimus, (c) Philemon, (d) Titus, had been a runaway slave, but after becoming a Christian, he returned to his master as a profitable servant. _____
4. John taught that love should be made known by: (a) words, (b) tongue, (c) promises, (d) deeds and truth.

5. Some of the members of the church at Corinth had been fornicators, idolators, adulterers, thieves, drunkards, etc., before they became Christians. (True or False)

6. The transformation of these in Corinth was brought about as recorded in Acts by: (a) hearing, believing and being baptized, (b) repenting and believing, (c) accepting Jesus as their personal Saviour, (d) praying through to God.

7. This transformation continues in the life of the Christian. That is, he grows in his Christian life. Paul taught in Romans that this growth was accomplished by: (a) waiting on the salvation of the Lord, (b) no effort on the Christian's part, (c)

renewing their mind, (d) the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit separate and apart from the scriptures.

8. Had much change been brought about in the lives of the Ephesian Christians? (Yes or No) _____
9. Christ came to (destroy, save) men's lives.

10. Does the gospel of Christ as taught in the New Testament scriptures have power to transform the lives of wicked men? (Yes or No) _____

Score: 10 points for each correct answer _____

Correct answers to questions in lesson 21: . . .

1. (c)
2. (f)
3. (is not)
4. (b)
5. (d)
6. (is)
7. (yes)
8. (does)
9. (escape)
10. (true)

List others who wish to take this course.