

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Bible Study Curriculum

"Spirit of Pride"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Introduction

“Self-will”

Often, people who are obstinate and stubborn are called strong-willed. Sometimes, what we are actually trying to say is that they are “self-willed.” In fact, having a strong will can be a positive attribute. However, when a person’s strong will conflicts with God’s authority, then it becomes self-will, pride, and is ultimately destructive, both to the individual and to others. In today’s lesson, we will see that Christians should humble themselves and submit to the will of God.

Key Verse

“I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me” (Jn. 5:30).

Lesson Summary

The story of the prodigal son illustrates the destructive nature of pride (Lu. 15:11-20). This younger son desired his inheritance, saying, “Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me” (v. 12). Afterward, he left home with all of his possessions to pursue his own will and desires (v. 13). This young man was determined to live his life by his own rule, not regarding the will of his father. His foolish pride robbed him of sound judgment and led him to squander all that he had received from his father (vv. 13-14). Pride left him hungry and empty-handed (vv. 14-16). Fortunately, his hard circumstances humbled him, causing him to see the error of his way and led him back home (vv. 17-20). Clearly, being self-willed is a destructive evil. James wrote of those who devise their plans and conduct their lives without considering God (Ja. 4:13-16). Such pride is evil, because it exalts self-will and ignores the will of God. The apostle Peter warned of false teachers in the church who would cause many to stray from the truth (2 Pe. 2:1-2). These last days’ deceivers and the people deceived by them are those who “despise government” (v. 10). Peter described them as “presumptuous” and “self-willed” (v. 10). As followers of Jesus Christ, we must guard ourselves against self-will and the spirit of pride. Jesus, our example in righteousness and holiness, asserted his own submission to the will of the Father (Jn. 5:30). He did not come in order to please himself, but to carry out God’s will (Jn. 6:38). Perhaps, no other occasion in the life of Christ demonstrates this better than his agony in the garden of Gethsemane. Though he prayed that he might possibly escape what was coming, he ultimately surrendered to the will of God, saying, “nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Mt. 26:39). Christ’s pattern of submission helps us to see our own obligation to do the will of God. Coming to terms with God’s will and doing his will are the marks of a true Christian (Mt. 26:42; 7:21).

Scripture Study

Self-will: A destructive evil – Lu. 15:11-20; Ja. 4:13-16; 2 Pe. 2:1-2, 10

Submission to the will of God – Jn. 5:30; 6:38; Mt. 26:39, 42; 7:21

Conclusion

As followers of Christ, we should not pursue our own will, but rather the will of our heavenly Father. Admittedly, doing God’s will is not always an easy task. Nevertheless, we will never regret the final outcome of pleasing him. While following self-will ends in destruction, fulfilling the will of God secures eternal life.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Bible Study Curriculum

"Spirit of Pride"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Self-promotion”

Introduction

Everyone enjoys being appreciated and promoted. A young adult is hired for a job with a promising future. He/she works hard, giving one hundred percent to the success of the company. After several years of faithful service, perhaps nothing is more rewarding than receiving an unexpected promotion. The feeling of promotion is exhilarating. Although promotion is a desirable and honorable goal, self-promotion is a prideful pursuit. In today's lesson, we will consider the negative aspects of self-promotion within the fellowship of the church.

Key Verse

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Ph. 2:3).

Lesson Summary

The apostles, James and John, are prime examples of self-promotion. They approached Jesus with a rather odd request, saying, “Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory” (Mk. 10:37). Jesus replied, “Ye know not what ye ask” (v. 38). Then he further corrected their misdirected pursuit (vv. 39-40). The negative reaction of the other ten apostles to James' and John's request created a teachable moment. Jesus told them not to seek preeminence, but rather seek to serve (vv. 42-45). Opposing the spirit of pride which he saw among the people, Jesus taught a parable about being an invited guest to a wedding feast (Lu. 14:7-11). He explained how a guest should take the least desirable seat, rather than taking the best seat at the feast. By taking the lowest seat available, an individual does not take a position of honor which belongs to another. Moreover, by taking the lowest position, that individual receives due honor and praise upon being promoted (receiving a higher seat). To this Jesus added, “For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (v. 11). Clearly, we should avoid self-assertion, attempting to push ourselves in front of others. In fact, the love of God “vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up” (1 Co. 13:4). Believers should not be braggers and boastful of themselves, nor of their accomplishments. Trying to build up ourselves in the eyes of others comes from the spirit of pride. Instead, we should promote Jesus Christ and lift up his worthy name (Ph. 2:9). In regard to our spiritual consecration, we also should avoid self-assertion. In Matthew 6:1-6 and 6:16-18, Jesus cautioned us about our motives. We should never give charitably to gain the praise and recognition of others (vv. 1-4). We should not pray to gain the attention and admiration of others (vv. 5-6). Likewise, fasting is not for public display, but rather to be done unto the Lord with discretion (vv. 16-18). In other words, our religious practices should never be used to lift up ourselves. In fact, Jesus criticized the religious leaders of his day for their hypocrisy and pride, because their motivation was self-assertion, desiring “to be seen of men” (Mt. 23:5-7). We should avoid this temptation.

Scripture Study

Seeking self-promotion – Mk. 10:35-45; Lu. 14:7-11

Avoiding self-assertion – 1 Co. 13:4; Mt. 6:1-6, 16-18; 23:5-12

Conclusion

The spirit of pride causes one to push himself in front of others, whereas Christ calls us to give greater consideration to others than to ourselves (Ph. 2:3). Self-promotion works against the Spirit of Christ and his desire for the fellowship and unity of the church.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Bible Study Curriculum

"Spirit of Pride"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Introduction

“Self-righteousness”

People sometimes have an attitude of superiority, feeling that they are better than others. Certainly, some fare better than others in a variety of ways, such as physically and economically; but none of us is more valuable or superior to others in the sight of God, “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Ro. 3:23). Everyone needs to be saved. This fact relegates all of humanity to the same level: lost without God. Thus, our true value and worth depend on our relationship with Jesus Christ. In today’s lesson, we will see that our value and worth in Christ are not a cause for pride and a superior attitude, but rather for humility.

Key Verse

“For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God” (Ro. 10:3).

Lesson Summary

The Scriptures teach: “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Ro. 3:10; Ps. 14:1, 3). Yet many religious people attempt “to establish their own righteousness,” as opposed to righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ (Ro. 10:3). Trusting in themselves, they rely on their own goodness for eternal life. This mindset corresponds to self-righteousness, a symptom of pride and what the Scriptures describe as “filthy-rags” in the sight of God (Is. 64:6). Recognizing the problem of self-righteousness among the people, Jesus told them the parable of the Pharisee and the publican (Lu. 18:9-14). The Pharisee prayed in the temple, despising others and justifying himself (vv. 11-12). But the publican prayed for God’s mercy (v. 13). God has respect for a humble spirit of repentance, but self-righteousness and the spirit of pride come under his judgment (v. 14). Jesus rebuked the scribes and Pharisees for putting on the appearance of righteousness when their hearts were actually full of sin and hypocrisy (Mt. 23:25-30). In fact, he condemned the Pharisees who justified themselves, and said to them, “For that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Lu. 16:15). Anytime Christians begin to inflate themselves, they are heading for certain trouble, unless they repent and correct their course (18:14). Satan is subtle and knows how to stroke the human ego. If individuals fall prey to self-righteousness and the spirit of pride, God will resist them (Ja. 4:6; 1 Pe. 5:5). The apostle Paul admonished the believer “not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly” (Ro. 12:3). As faithful followers of Christ, even the good works which we do are no longer ours, but rather they are works of God’s grace through us (1 Co. 15:9-10; Ga. 2:20). The credit for all that we accomplish belongs to God. Christ is our undeserved righteousness and the very source of our good works (Ep. 2:10). From this perspective, we have no cause for pride and self-righteousness. Accordingly, Paul cautioned the saints about looking down on others; he instructed them not to place themselves above others, but to lower themselves in humility (Ro. 12:16).

Scripture Study

An abomination – Ro. 3:10; Ps. 14:1, 3; Ro. 10:3; Is. 64:6; Lu. 16:15; 18:9-14; Mt. 23:25-30

Our humiliation – Ja. 4:6; 1 Pe. 5:5; Ro. 12:3, 16; 1 Co. 15:9-10; Ga. 2:20; Ep. 2:10

Conclusion

Self-righteousness is not compatible with the Spirit of Christ. Jesus said, “Without me ye can do nothing” (Jn. 15:5). Our ability to be righteous and to bear the fruit of righteousness is completely dependent on our relationship with him. Keeping this truth in our hearts will help us to overcome the destructive spirit of pride.

Faith-N-Focus : *E-quip Your Faith*

Bible Study Curriculum

"Adultery and Fornication"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Introduction

“Sensuality”

We live in a sensual, lustful world. For example, turning on the television can become a rather risky act, because we never know what will show up on the TV screen. Often the commercials are more disturbing than the programs themselves. Suggestive language, provocative images, and sexual innuendoes are injurious to the soul and offensive to the Holy Spirit. As Christians, we must guard ourselves against sensuality.

Key Verse

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Ro. 12:2).

Lesson Summary

Sensuality and sexuality are not the same. Sexuality is a major part of the natural composition of humankind. It is not dirty or shameful, in and of itself, for God created man in his own image, and made them male and female in order to procreate and inhabit the earth: “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it” (Ge. 1:27-28). Moreover, after God created man, he made the woman “out of man” to be his companion and helper (2:18-25). They were literally a match made in heaven. The distinction and attraction between the two were “very good” in the sight of God (1:31). From the beginning, the Lord placed sexuality safely within the marriage relationship between a man and his wife (2:23-24; He. 13:4). Nevertheless, though sexuality itself is not sinful, we must secure and protect our hearts in order to prevent our desires from becoming sensual and lustful. For if we pervert God’s original plan and purpose in our natural desires, they become sensual desires driven by vile, unrestrained lusts, which result in sexual immorality. Thus, sensuality is the doorway to sexual sins. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrha are historical examples of God’s judgment against sexual immorality (2 Pe. 2:6; Ge. 19:4-11). Because righteous Lot saw and heard the vile wickedness of the people, his soul was vexed continually (2 Pe. 2:7-8). In spite of God’s historical judgments, the world today with its godless system continues to promote sensual pleasures which gratify the desires of the flesh (Ep. 2:2-3). These pleasures are strategically advertised through various media and flaunted through the lifestyles of the unredeemed. As sanctified and Spirit-filled Christians, we should critically monitor all that we see and hear. Our eyes and ears give sensually-driven words and images entrance into our hearts. By quickly closing the door to sensuality, we keep our hearts from being affected and infected by it (2 Pe. 2:9). Furthermore, we should guard our talking and conversations to avoid opening that door. The world often turns sexuality into a joke and a jesting matter. But this grieves the Holy Spirit (Ep. 5:3-4, 11-12; 4:29-30). We respectfully should keep sexuality where God originally placed it – safely within the marriage relationship.

Scripture Study

Sexuality – Ge. 1:27-28, 31; 2:18-25; He. 13:4

Sensuality – 2 Pe. 2:6-9; Ge. 19:4-11; Ep. 2:2-3; 5:3-4, 11-12; 4:29-30

Conclusion

The apostles warned of the last days when mockers would “walk after their own ungodly lusts” (Jude 17-18). Jude described them as “sensual, having not the Spirit” (v. 19). He called them “filthy dreamers” and compared them to: 1) the Hebrews whom God destroyed in the wilderness, 2) the fallen angels reserved unto judgment, and 3) those destroyed in Sodom and Gomorrha (vv. 5-8). In contrast to these, Jude admonished the saints to be spiritual: “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost” (v. 20).

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Bible Study Curriculum

"Adultery and Fornication"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Introduction

“An Infected Heart”

Infections stem from the presence of bacteria in the body. Such infections may begin as a small, localized problem, but potentially can make the whole body sick. At first, people may be unaware of having an infection, until it affects their normal functions. A number of side-effects are associated with infections, such as pain, inflammation, vomiting, fever, and even death. Clearly, infections should be taken seriously. Like bacteria, sensual desires and fleshly lusts infect an individual's heart and cause him/her to sin. James wrote, “And sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (Ja. 1:15).

Key Verse

“But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Mt. 5:28).

Lesson Summary

Satan is subtle and crafty; he knows when to tempt and how to lead into sin and error. He seeks to captivate the human mind with sensual thoughts and images. When this happens to an individual, sexual sin surely lies at the door of one's heart (Mk. 7:18-23). Amnon, the firstborn son of King David, committed fornication with his half-sister, Tamar (2 Sa. 3:2; 13:1). His disgraceful downfall began with sensual thoughts and desires for her (13:2). His sinful desires moved him to deceive her and ultimately to rape her (vv. 3-14). Clearly, Amnon surrendered his thoughts and then his heart to sexual immorality. This world is filled with sexual vulgarities and perversions. Nevertheless, these vices cannot hurt us as long as they do not enter into our hearts (Mk. 7:18-19). For this reason, Solomon warned his son, saying, “Lust not after her beauty **in thine heart**; neither let her take thee with her eyelids. **Let not thine heart** decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths” (Pr. 6:25; 7:25). Adultery and fornication do not emerge instantly, but like bacteria, sensual desires grow into filthy, sinful infections. Before committing the actual acts of adultery and fornication, these sins first infect the heart (Mt. 5:28; Mk. 7:20-23). By the time the sinful acts are publicly exposed, they are already firmly rooted in the heart of an individual. Thus, the acts of adultery and fornication substantiate the presence of sin in one's heart. Solomon instructed his son in the law and commandments of the Lord: “My son, forget not my law; but **let thine heart keep my commandments**; For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee. Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; **write them upon the table of thine heart**” (Pr. 3:1-3). Likewise, as we keep the Word of God in our hearts, we keep sin out of our lives (Ps. 119:11). Purity begins in the heart, not in external actions. We are not holy simply because our speech and actions appear holy. We are holy because our hearts are sanctified and made pure by the blood of Jesus Christ. Thus, our speech and actions are holy because our hearts are pure and holy (Mt. 12:35). As saints of God, we must resist sensual temptations and keep our hearts pure, bearing in mind the promise: “blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (5:8).

Scripture Study

Infecting our hearts – Mk. 7:18-23; 2 Sa. 13:1-14; Pr. 6:25; 7:25; Mt. 5:28

Protecting our hearts – Pr. 3:1-3; Ps. 119:11; Mt. 12:35; 5:8

Conclusion

We cannot stop temptation from coming our way, but we can turn our thoughts away from sensuality and toward the Word of God. As we meditate on the Holy Scriptures, our minds and hearts are sanctified by the truth (Jn. 17:17). Through securing and protecting the desires of our hearts, we keep ourselves from sin and transgression (1 Th. 4:3-4).

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Bible Study Curriculum

"Adultery and Fornication"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Introduction

“Works of Wickedness”

Adultery and fornication are among the first-mentioned works of the flesh in the Scriptures (Mk. 7:21-23; Ro. 1:29-32; Ga. 5:19-21; Ep. 5:3-7; Co. 3:5-9). The works of the flesh arise out of a sinful heart. After sensual lusts infect the heart of an individual, the works of the flesh await an opportunity to manifest themselves in many wicked ways. In today’s lesson, we will examine the spirit of adultery and fornication as “works of wickedness.”

Key Verse

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness” (Ga. 5:19).

Lesson Summary

In Galatians 5:19-21, the apostle Paul identifies specific works of the flesh, beginning with adultery and fornication. He next mentions uncleanness and lasciviousness. This is significant. All four of these terms are related to sensuality. Adultery and fornication have interconnected meanings (see the Monthly Summary). Fornication (*porneia*) in its broad meaning includes adultery (*moicheia*). Whereas adultery and fornication refer more to the action of sexual sin, uncleanness and lasciviousness refer more to the attitude or spirit behind such wickedness. In other words, adultery and fornication arise from impure and uncontrollable desires. Thus, adultery and fornication along with uncleanness and lasciviousness comprehensively mean every imaginable work of sexual sin, without having to give a detailed list of these sins and transgressions. Paul’s brief list is therefore inclusive of all of the sexual vices we face in our world today: premarital sex, extramarital affairs (infidelity), divorce and remarriage, cohabitation, polygamy, prostitution, homosexuality and lesbianism, bisexuality and transvestism, bestiality, incest, pedophilia, and pornography. Furthermore, sexual sins are typically linked to other vile works of wickedness. Their placement at the top of Paul’s list affirms their prominence. For example, fornication is historically connected to idolatrous and pagan rituals, and even to demonic worship. Paul rebuked the church at Corinth because of fornication and idolatry (1 Co. 6:15-20; 2 Co. 6:16-17; 12:21). Reflecting on Israel’s transgressions, Paul warned the church at Corinth to forsake fornication and idolatry: “Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand” (1 Co. 10:7-8, 14, 19-20; Ex. 32:1-7; Nu. 25:1-9; Re. 2:14). Demonic spirits, often termed “unclean” spirits in the Gospels, promote every filthy and wicked work. Concisely, sexual sins are analogous to a savage-like spirit and indicate one’s total depravity (Ro. 1:21-28).

Scripture Study

Works of wickedness – Mk. 7:21-23; Ro. 1:29-32; Ga. 5:19-21; Ep. 5:3-7; Co. 3:5-9

Fornication and idolatry – 2 Co. 6:16-17; 12:21; 1 Co. 10:7-8, 14, 19-20; Ex. 32:1-7; Nu. 25:1-9; Re. 2:14; Ro. 1:21-28

Conclusion

While adultery and fornication have become commonplace and even glamorized in western culture, God’s church must not become tolerant of such wicked practices (1 Co. 5:1, 9-13). We have an obligation to stand up and declare the truth of God’s Word, saying, “Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience” (Ep. 5:6).

Faith-N-Focus : *E-quip Your Faith*

Bible Study Curriculum

"Adultery and Fornication"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“A Deceptive Spirit”

Introduction

The nature of sin is deceptive. Sexual sins do not present themselves as destructive and deadly, but rather as glamorous and beneficial in fulfilling one's personal desires and needs. These sins operate on a premise of self-fulfillment and self-justification. While a repentant sinner is justified by faith and made righteous by the blood of Christ, sinning can never be justified. Thus, adultery and fornication stem from a deceptive spirit.

Key Verse

“Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen” (Ro. 1:25).

Lesson Summary

When Solomon instructed his son in the wisdom of the Lord, he warned him to avoid the adulteress. He portrayed her as a deceiver, whose words seem sweet and smooth, when, in fact, she is bitter and deadly (Pr. 5:1-5). Indeed, those who yield to the sins of adultery and fornication have surrendered themselves to a deceptive spirit (2 Pe. 2:12-14). The apostle Peter described such sin and corruption in the church as “spots and blemishes” (v. 13). These corrupt ones, “having eyes full of adultery,” are both deceived by sin (“cannot cease from sin”), and they themselves are deceivers, “beguiling unstable souls” (v. 14). The apostle Paul warned against them, saying, “Let no man deceive you with vain words” (Ep. 5:3-6). Sexual immorality results from embracing and promoting lies. Paul writes of those whom God turns over to sexual perversion and debauchery (Ro. 1:24-28). These are the ones who replace “the truth of God” with a lie, rejecting his truth to pursue their own will and desires (v. 25). Lies and “deceitful lusts” produce adultery and fornication, but God's truth produces “righteousness and true holiness” (Ep. 4:17-25). If adultery and fornication arise in the house of God, these sins do not readily disclose themselves as wickedness, openly nor publicly, but rather seek to hide their sinful practices under a cloak of righteousness. Jesus boldly confronted the problem of religious hypocrisy, saying, “Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity” (Mt. 23:28). Professing believers may present themselves as people of God, when actually they are inwardly unclean (v. 27). In the story of David and Bathsheba, we see the way adultery works (2 Sa. 11:5-17, 26-27). After this sin takes root in one's heart, and an individual commits the sinful act, adultery often leads to greater wickedness through further deception, lies, and hypocrisy.

Scripture Study

Deception – Pr. 5:1-5; 2 Pe. 2:12-14; Ep. 5:3-6

Lies – Ro. 1:24-28; Ep. 4:17-25

Hypocrisy – Mt. 23:27-28; 2 Sa. 11:5-17, 26-27

Conclusion

Sexual immorality permeates the world at all levels of society. Therefore, the church must cry out against this wickedness. We must remain on guard, lest adultery and fornication infiltrate the fellowship of the church through deception, lying, and hypocrisy. As such, the church must preach and teach against sexual immorality, confronting the lies and deceptions of the enemy.

Faith-N-Focus : *E-quip Your Faith*

Bible Study Curriculum

"Adultery and Fornication"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Introduction

“God’s Judgment”

Other than the illumination of the Holy Spirit, context is the most important aspect of Biblical interpretation. Pulling individual verses, and even passages of Scripture, out of their specific context can lead us to a faulty interpretation and application of the Scriptures. However, when a verse is interpreted in its immediate context, the context itself clarifies the meaning and proper application of the Scripture. In today’s lesson, we will examine Luke 16:18 in its specific context.

Key Verse

“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (He. 13:4).

Lesson Summary

In Luke 16:18, Jesus taught the permanence of marriage between one man and one woman for a lifetime commitment. His teaching condemns the one who puts away and remarries, and also the one who marries the divorcee. Thus, it clearly condemns the divorcee for remarriage. In other words, when a marriage is dissolved by man and remarriage takes place, adultery and fornication unavoidably result. In Luke 16, the context of Jesus’ teaching against adultery and fornication explains the seriousness of God’s judgment against sexual immorality. His teaching against adultery is prefaced by the permanence of God’s Word (vv. 16-17). The Word of God does not pass away – his truth does not fail (v. 17; Mt. 5:17-19; 24:35). Moreover, the permanence of God’s Word contrasts the religious hypocrisy of the Pharisees, who seek to justify their unrighteousness (v. 15). Furthermore, self-justification is placed in the context of those who serve the god of this world (mammon), rather than the one, true God (vv. 13-14). Finally, Christ’s teaching against adultery is followed by the story of God’s eternal judgment against sin (vv. 19-25). The Lord will judge sin finally with the flames and torments of hell (vv. 23-25). Among the prevalent corruptions of humankind are adultery and fornication. These sins alone will take innumerable souls to their eternal doom. God’s Word against adultery and fornication will never change. However, many will seek to justify their sinful marriage relationships, choosing the god of this world above the one, true God. That which was spoken of the rich man is true of so many today: “remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things” (v. 25). Many professing believers choose to satisfy and comfort themselves in this life, yet do so in disobedience to the commandments of the Lord. Many religious groups seek to justify sinful marriages because of comfort and mammon, but this is an abomination in the sight of God. According to his Word, God will judge adultery and fornication with hell-fire (He. 13:4). What is the solution for those caught in sexual immorality? Repentance and turning from one’s wicked way is God’s solution (Lu. 16:27-31). The sinner may be justified by faith; but his sinning will never be justified and made righteous. Thus, one cannot continue in a relationship of adultery or fornication, yet remain justified in the sight of God. In Luke 16, Jesus’ teaching is clear: while faith and repentance lead to his mercy, self-justification results in God’s judgment against adultery and fornication. When members of the church refuse to repent of their disobedience, discipline becomes necessary for the continuing health of the church (1 Co. 5:1-13). Without discipline, adultery and fornication can infect the whole body (vv. 6-7). When firm and loving attempts at restoration fail, we must remove a rebellious member from the fellowship (membership) of the church (vv. 2, 11-13). The purpose of such discipline is the ultimate restoration and salvation of the soul (v. 5).

Scripture Study

Judgment of God – Lu. 16:13-25

Discipline of the church – 1 Co. 5:1-13

Conclusion

God will judge adultery and fornication. For this reason, discipline is so important. When the church disciplines an erring member, this action unmistakably affirms that God will judge the rebellious works of the sinner. Therefore, the church should lovingly seek to restore erring members, but discipline those who refuse to repent of their sinful ways.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Bible Study Curriculum

"Saving Works of Grace"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“The Basis of Conviction”

Introduction

The basis of conviction begins with a simple question. How do we define the word *holy*? Another way of asking the question is: How do we understand or comprehend the meaning of *holy*? Apart from the context of God himself, defining *holy* is impossible. Holy is only understood when identified with the nature, character, and attributes of God in comparison and contrast with sinful humanity. In this lesson, the student will see that conviction begins with God’s holiness.

Key Verse

“Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Pe. 1:16).

Lesson Summary

When Isaiah saw a vision of God, he heard the seraphim crying one to another, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory” (Is. 6:3). In Revelation 4:8, when John witnessed a similar vision of God, the Bible says, “And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.” These visions given by the Spirit to his holy prophets, spanning both old and new covenants, declare God with a holy trio: “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts” and “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.” Eternal God, the Word in the beginning, the Creator of the universe and all that exists, is holy, holy, holy (Ge. 1:1; Jn. 1:1). However, fallen humanity is not holy. When King David examined his own heart, he saw within himself the sinful condition of fallen man (Ps. 51:5). The apostle Paul identified an unholy nature in humanity with its propensity to change, even to reject, the glory of God (Ro. 1:22-25). In Romans 3:10-23, he elaborated further on humanity’s unholy condition before the Lord, saying, “There is none righteous, no, not one” (v. 10). Moreover, in 1 Peter 1:16, the apostle emphasized God’s call and expectation for us, declaring, “Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.” This contrast between holy God and unholy humanity and God’s expectation for us to be holy makes conviction possible. In Luke 5:1-11, we see how Peter experienced conviction based on God’s holiness: “When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (v. 8). When John saw Christ in his glory, the Bible states, “And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead” (Re. 1:17). When he caught a glimpse of God’s holiness, he fell down before Jesus Christ like a dead man. In John we see the righteous response of a man who comes face to face with holy God – he is completely humbled in the presence of the Lord. Without a doubt, humanity at its spiritual best can never stand equal to holy God – every knee will bow (Ph. 2:10).

Scripture Study

God is holy – Is. 6:3; Re. 4:8;

Humanity is not holy – Ps. 51:5; Ro. 1:22-25, 3:10-23

Seeing ourselves in relationship to God – 1 Pe.1:16; Re. 1:17; Ph. 2:10; Lu. 5:1-11

Conclusion

Conviction builds on the foundation of God’s holiness. God is holy, but fallen humanity is not. This distinction (or contrast) between holy God and sinful humanity is the basis for true conviction.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Bible Study Curriculum

"Saving Works of Grace"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Introduction "True Confession"

How would you like for someone to say to you, "I know I did you wrong, but I cannot or will not do anything to change my behavior toward you?" This statement may convey some level of confession or admission of guilt, but it does not reflect genuine repentance. Many people are professing Jesus Christ, but how many have a true confession in faith (Mt. 7:13-14)? In today's lesson, we will help the student to distinguish true confession from false profession.

Key Verse

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Pr. 28:13).

Lesson Summary

The prophet Isaiah's example of conviction and repentance under the old covenant has particular significance to the unity of the Bible through demonstrating the salvific work of grace in the New Testament. Isaiah experiences God's saving grace. By the work of the Spirit, he sees God in his holiness; he recognizes his own sinfulness; he experiences the guilt and judgment of his sinful condition ("Woe is me!"); he confesses and repents of his sinful condition (or his transgressions and uncleanness) before God; and therefore his sins are forgiven. Notice how Isaiah's conviction, "Woe is me," leads to his confession, "for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips" (Is. 6:5). Isaiah is admitting that he is unclean before God or that he is sinful. Again, conviction leads to or anticipates confession; that is, confession is the desired outcome of conviction. In 1 John 1:8-10, the apostle explains that confession is necessary to salvation. Forgiveness and cleansing are conditionally based on confession – "If we confess our sins." Thus, one cannot be saved without the admission of one's sin and guilt. What is one of the distinctions between a true confession and a false profession? True confession is an admission of guilt with the intent of correcting one's wrong behavior. In Luke 19:1-10, Zacchaeus illustrates true confession. He was "chief among the publicans, and he was rich," which persuades us to believe he was dishonest in his taxing practices (v. 2). He was viewed among the people as a sinner (v. 7). Jesus saw him as a sinner (v. 10). Clearly, he saw himself as a sinner, but he desired to change or correct his wrong behavior (v. 8). This is what we call genuine repentance: confession with a change of attitude and behavior. Solomon's wisdom perfectly explains repentance as both confessing and forsaking sin (Pr. 28:13). Like Zacchaeus, those who come to Jesus Christ, admitting and turning away from their sins, will reap the mercy of God.

Scripture Study

Repentance: admission of sin – Is. 6:5; 1 Jn. 1:8-10

Repentance: changed behavior – Lu. 19:1-10; Pr. 28:13

Conclusion

Again, true confession is an admission of guilt with the intent of correcting one's wrong behavior. In fact, to confess guilt and then turn and continue to repeat the offense lacks purpose and sincerity. Genuine repentance says, "I know I did you wrong, but by God's grace I am going to do you right from this point forward." In our next lesson, we will study more about repentance as it relates to changed behavior.

Faith-N-Focus : *E-quip Your Faith*

Bible Study Curriculum

"Saving Works of Grace"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Introduction **“You Must Be Born Again”**

In regeneration, we experience the new birth. Nicodemus, a Pharisee and member of the Jewish Sanhedrin, came to Jesus during the night. He desired to meet with Jesus and to talk with him secretly, probably because of his high position as a ruler among the Jews. Jesus explained to Nicodemus the experience of regeneration, in terms of the new birth or being born again. Jesus told Nicodemus, “Ye must be born again” (Jn. 3:7).

Key Verse

“Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again” (Jn. 3:7).

Lesson Summary

First, Jesus directly connected the new birth (being born again) to salvation. Without the new birth, there is no salvation. Jesus clearly explained to Nicodemus, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (Jn. 3:3). And again, “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again” (Jn. 3:7). Therefore, being born again is not optional, but rather, the new birth is what characterizes the true believer. Jesus distinguishes true salvation from merely professing Christ and being baptized. He taught, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Mt. 7:21). As a result, many professions of faith are false. Such professions are an act of the human will – an exercise in self-righteousness. But regeneration (being born again) is an act of God’s will (Jn. 1:13; Titus 3:5-7). We are not saved because we merely maintain a profession of faith and righteous works, but we maintain a profession of faith and righteous works because we are genuinely saved, having been regenerated and born again. To enter the kingdom of God, we must be born again! Second, Jesus explained the new birth as a spiritual birth. Experiencing new life in Jesus Christ comes through being born of the Spirit (Jn. 3:8). Jesus Christ gives us the power of the Spirit to become the sons or children of God through a spiritual birth (Jn. 1:12-13). When speaking with Nicodemus, Jesus emphasized this spiritual birth (being born of the Spirit) through contrasting it with the fleshly, natural birth (Jn. 3:5-6). Paul made the same distinction between the fleshly and the spiritual birth (Ga. 4:29). The apostle Peter also taught the spiritual birth as opposed to the fleshly (1 Pe. 1:23-25). Nicodemus needed to understand that neither his position as a Jewish leader nor even his Jewish lineage were sufficient to gain him a place in the kingdom of God. Clearly, salvation is not secured through our natural birth or by our human will, but we must be regenerated by the Spirit of God according to God’s will. The new birth is a radical, spiritual transformation in the heart of the believer through placing one’s faith in Jesus Christ (1 Jn. 5:4).

Scripture Study

The necessity of the new birth – Jn. 3:3, 7; Titus 3:5-7

Born of the Spirit – Jn. 1:12-13, 3:5-6, 8; Ga. 4:29; 1 Pe. 1:23-25

Conclusion

When a man is resurrected from the dead, does he have to be convinced that he is living? When a woman gives birth to a baby, does she have to be convinced that new life is brought into the world? In next week’s lesson, we will discuss the results or blessings of regeneration. These blessings give witness to the spiritual transformation of the born again believer.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Bible Study Curriculum

"Subsequent Grace"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Introduction “The Second Definite Work”

In Galatians 2:16, Paul spoke of being justified by faith, not by the works of the law. In verse 17, he spoke of a contradiction. He wrote of seeking to be justified while still under the influence of sin, saying, “But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid” (Ga. 2:17). He explains the solution to this dilemma in terms of being crucified with Christ, or sanctification (v. 20). Whereas justification provides pardon for sins committed, sanctification frees the believer from the power and domination of the inward, fleshly nature of sin.

Key Verse

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Ga. 2:20).

Lesson Summary

In Galatians 4:22-31, Paul shows that Abraham had two sons: Ishmael by his bondmaid, and Isaac by his wife, Sarah. No doubt, for a period of time, all was well in the house of Abraham. But eventually, a conflict developed. In fact, Ishmael began to persecute Isaac. There came a definite time when the bondwoman, Hagar, and her son, Ishmael, had to be cast out of the house (Ge. 21:9-12). It may be seen that they were not in the process of being cast out, but they were indeed cast out at a definite time. Otherwise, Isaac, the son of God’s promise, would not be able to grow up and mature in a peaceful and joyful setting. There would always be undue friction and competition. In the same way, when a believer experiences the new birth, the Spirit of God takes up residence in him/her. Not only is the child of God justified, but the very life of the Spirit is infused in the heart of the believer. For this reason, the new convert is filled with joy and peace. Nevertheless, because the Spirit now resides in the believer through the new birth, a conflict is immediately initiated. The conflict results from the “old man” or flesh being at war with the Spirit. The two cannot peacefully coexist in the same house. We see this conflict in Galatians 2:17-18 when Paul spoke of rebuilding the works of sin after having been justified. Later in Galatians 5:17, he again spoke of the contention between the flesh and the Spirit. What is the resolution to the conflict? Paul wrote to the Galatians, “Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son” (Ga. 4:30). Since the flesh and the Spirit cannot live together in harmony -- cast out the flesh! Paul described this work as the death of the flesh or being crucified with Christ (Ga. 2:19-20). He emphasized this point again in Galatians 5:24 as the solution to the conflict. In other words, for the Spirit to live and thrive in us, the will of the sinful flesh with its sinful works must die (Col. 3:3). Through the death of the flesh, sinful works have no place in the life of the sanctified believer (Col. 3:5-10; Ro. 8:12-13). As sanctified believers, we are called to walk in the Spirit (Ga. 5:16). Thus, sanctification enables growth and maturity in the believer.

Scripture Study

The Conflict – Ga. 2:16-18; 4:22-23, 28-29; 5:17

The Resolution – Ro. 8:12-13; Ga. 2:19-20; 4:30-31; 5:16, 24; Col. 3:3, 5-10

Conclusion

The conflict of the flesh and the Spirit arises from the new birth. After being justified and regenerated, the child of God finds within himself/herself a battle between the flesh and the Spirit. Sanctification is the resolution to this crisis. While some experience sanctification at about the same time of their conversion, and while others experience it at about the same time of being baptized with the Holy Ghost, it should not be confused with justification, regeneration, or Spirit-baptism. It is a second, definite work of grace, following the new birth and preceding the baptism with the Holy Ghost.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"The Nature of God"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Introduction

"Holy Spirit"

If someone asked, "What is God like?" how should we answer them? Of course, we should point them to the Son of God, Jesus Christ, God in the flesh (Jn. 1:1, 14; 14:9). Additionally, throughout the Scriptures, many words and ideas describe and define "who" God is and "what" God is like. In fact, God even revealed himself through a variety of names, like *Jehovah-jireh* ("the Lord sees/provides," Ge. 22:14) and *Jehovah-shalom* ("the Lord is peace," Jud. 6:24). But perhaps one of the most definitive words to describe the nature of God is "spirit." Then one might ask, "What is the Spirit of God like?" The Bible describes the Spirit of God as *holy* Spirit. In today's lesson, we will study the nature of God: he is spirit, and he is holy.

Key Verse

"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in Spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:24).

Lesson Summary

When Jesus talked with the woman of Samaria, he challenged her thinking about God explaining that worship has little to do with physical dimensions, like where we worship. Instead, real worship depends on "spirit" and "truth." However, to the worldly mindset both spirit and truth are intangible and remarkably strange. When Jesus was on trial, Pilate scoffed at him, asking, "What is truth?" (Jn. 18:38). Regarding the Spirit of truth, Jesus declared, "Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not" (Jn. 14:17). Because "God is a Spirit," we worship him accordingly, yet our worship is strange to the world (Jn. 4:23-24). Though God has certainly revealed himself to us in human terms and forms, especially in the revelation of his only begotten Son so that we can comprehend who he is, we nevertheless cannot confine him to human limitations (1 Jn. 1:1-3). Since the nature of God is eternal spirit (Ps. 93:2), we know him not in forms and rituals, but spiritually (Jn. 4:24; 1 Co. 2:9-12). Though the Bible ascribes to God man-like characteristics, (for example, hands, arms, face, and eyes), he is actually Spirit. The apostle John further emphasized the spiritual nature of God when he wrote, "No man hath seen God at any time" (Jn. 1:18; 1 Jn. 4:12; Ex. 33:20). When Moses went to meet with God, he did not see God, per se, but rather he saw the glory of God's Spirit and presence (Ex. 33:7-11; 34:5-8, 28-35). As Christians, we therefore know God by the Word and the witness of his Spirit within us. Again, Jesus said that "the world cannot receive" the Spirit, because he cannot be seen, for he dwells within believers (Jn. 14:17). What is the Spirit of God like? When the psalmist wrote about worshiping God, he explained, "it [his name] is holy" (Ps. 99:3), "God is holy" (vv. 5, 9), and "worship at his holy hill" (v. 9), a reference to the temple (tabernacle) of the Lord. The psalmist's emphasis is: "God is holy." The apostle Paul wrote about the temple of the Lord. Although we may worship God in physical buildings, we ourselves are actually the temple of God. Through faith in Christ, we are transformed into the temple of the Lord (1 Co. 3:16; 2 Co. 6:16). As such, God indwells us by his Spirit. Paul went on to say that the temple of God is holy (1 Co. 3:17), and that's why our body is holy? It is holy because the holy Spirit of God dwells there (Ep. 4:30). We should, therefore, reverence God's Spirit and our body as holy, being God's special dwelling place (Ep. 2:21-22). Note: We will study more about the indwelling Spirit in lesson four.

Scripture Study

God is Spirit – Jn. 4:23-24; 1 Co. 2:9-12; Jn. 1:18; 1 Jn. 4:12; Ex. 33:7-11, 20; Ex. 34:5-8, 28-35; Jn. 14:17

God is Holy – 1 Co. 3:16-17; 2 Co. 6:16; Ep. 4:30; Ps. 99:1-9; Ep. 2:21-22; 1 Co. 2:12-14

Conclusion

The apostles walked with Jesus Christ upon the earth. They knew him face to face. The apostles heard, saw, observed, and touched the Word of God incarnate (1 Jn. 1:1). But today, Jesus resides at the right hand of the Father. Though we do not see God and hear him in the natural, per se, we nevertheless know him personally and discern who he is by his Holy Spirit indwelling us (1 Co. 2:12-14).

Faith-N-Focus : *E-quip Your Faith*

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"The Nature of God"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Introduction

“Omnipresence”

We serve an awesome omnipresent God, which means his Spirit permeates the entire world. God’s presence transcends our human limitations. For example, although a man cannot be in two places at once, God’s Spirit is not confined to such physical barriers and constraints. The writers of the Holy Scriptures explain God’s omnipresence both from a cosmic perspective and a personal point-of-view. In today’s lesson, we will see that God’s presence is far beyond mankind, yet at the same time his presence extends to all who call upon his name (Ps. 113:4-6; Ro. 10:13). He is transcendent yet immanent. He “sits upon the circle of the earth” (Is. 40:22), yet he dwells in our hearts.

Key Verse

“Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence” (Ps. 139:7)?

Lesson Summary

Isaiah prophesied of God’s greatness and vastness in the universe (Is. 40:12; 66:1; Ac. 7:48-50). Like the song says, “He’s got the whole world in his hands.” His knowledge and understanding of his creation far surpass our human comprehension. The knowledge of science, though incredibly extensive, is as nothing to the knowledge of God (Is. 40:13-17). While God knows so much about mankind, humanity knows so little about him. This is why fallen man’s attempts to honor God and worship him prove to be vain, for how can lowly, sinful man comprehend a lofty, holy God who inhabits and envelops the vast universe, whose eyes “run to and fro throughout the whole earth” (Is. 40:18-22; 2 Ch. 16:9; Ac. 17:24-28). Certainly, God is present in his creation on a universal, cosmic level – he sees all and knows all (Je. 23:23-24). Although God “inhabiteth eternity,” he is also omnipresent in a personal sense (Is. 57:15). Contrary to Deistic thinking, God did not create and then withdraw his personal presence from his creation, leaving us to our own destiny. Rather, God is currently working in his creation, primarily, to bring salvation and restoration to humanity through Jesus Christ (Jn. 16:8-9). To accomplish this, the Spirit of God is omnipresent and active in the world today. God can personally assist a single individual and meet his need, while at the same time help an unlimited number of others who call upon his name (Ro. 10:13). Being omnipresent, the Holy Spirit is unlimited in his capacity to be present and personal to each and every believer at all times. The psalmist David explained that God searches the believer and knows everything about him (Ps. 139:1-6). God knows our activities, words, and the meditations of our hearts. In fact, his presence in our lives is so invasive that there is no place to escape his Spirit (v. 7). No matter where we go, God is there waiting on our arrival (vv. 8-10). Moreover, as children of God, we have this assurance: when we draw near to God, he also draws near to us (Ja. 4:8). We serve a personal God, who will be with us to the end of the world (Mt. 28:20; He. 13:5).

Scripture Study

His universal presence – Is. 40:12-22; 66:1; Ac. 7:48-50; 2 Ch. 16:9; Ac. 17:24-28; Je. 23:23-24

His personal presence – Is. 57:15; Jn. 16:8-9; Ps. 139:1-10; Ja. 4:8; Mt. 28:20; He. 13:5

Conclusion

God is omnipresent – his presence fills the earth. Understanding the nature of God helps us to trust the Lord more completely. Like the psalmist, when we understand that God’s Spirit is always present to us, no matter what we face, we can have the calm assurance that a loving Father is near, he knows our needs, and he is willing and ready to help us in our time of need. What a comforting thought to know that God is close at hand.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"The Nature of God"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

"Shekinah"

Introduction

Shekinah refers to the manifest glory of God. God has revealed himself by visible signs and miraculous demonstrations throughout history, even showing his presence with visible glory. In today's lesson, we will review examples of God's manifest glory in order to understand the glory that Christ has placed within the church.

Key Verse

"And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one" (Jn. 17:22).

Lesson Summary

One of the most striking examples of the manifest glory of God occurred at the dedication of Solomon's temple (1 Ki. 8:1-11; 2 Ch. 5:1-14). This temple was the house that King David desired to build for the Lord, but God would not permit him to construct it because he had been a man of war and shed excessive blood (1 Ch. 22:5-8; 28:1-3). His son, Solomon, fulfilled David's dream of building a temple, and saw this vision through to its completion. In brief, when the priests brought the Ark of the Covenant to the temple, they offered innumerable sacrifices (1 Ki. 8:5) and worshipped the Lord with music and singing (2 Ch. 5:12-13). Then the glory of the Lord filled the temple as a cloud so that the priests were unable to continue their ministry (1 Ki. 8:11; 2 Ch. 5:14). The dedication reached its climax at the conclusion of Solomon's prayer when the fire of God consumed their sacrifices and the visible shekinah filled the house of the Lord (2 Ch. 7:1-3). When Jesus Christ fulfilled his earthly ministry with his apostles, the glory of God was visibly manifested through him. Jesus took Peter, James, and John "up into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them" (Mt. 17:1-9; Mk. 9:1-9; Lu. 9:27-36). His physical appearance was temporarily changed, so that he radiated with a brilliant light. The apostles actually saw the supernatural glory of God in Christ – glory that was veiled by his natural flesh. Moreover, they heard the voice of the Father speaking from the cloud that covered them, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Mt. 17:5). Likewise, on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost was poured out upon the church, the visible presence of God was manifested in and among the saints (Ac. 1:4-5, 8; 2:1-12). When the Holy Ghost descended on the church, the natural atmosphere changed, for a "rushing mighty wind" was heard among them (2:2), and "cloven tongues" like fire appeared and sat on them as a miraculous sign of God's glorious presence among them (v. 3). When the Holy Ghost filled them, they all "began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (v. 4). The saints spoke with a spiritual language inspired by God. These signs and wonders were visible confirmations of God's glory in the church.

Scripture Study

Solomon's temple dedication – 1 Ki. 8:1-11; 2 Ch. 5:1-14; 7:1-3; 1 Ch. 22:5-8; 28:1-3

Christ's transfiguration – Mt. 17:1-9; Mk. 9:1-9; Lu. 9:27-36

Holy Ghost outpouring – Acts 1:4-5, 8; 2:1-12

Conclusion

Whereas in the Old Testament the glory of God was revealed primarily in external manifestations, under the dynamic New Covenant, God desires to manifest his glory in and through man. The outpouring of the Holy Ghost in and among the saints explains how God's glory is manifested in the church today (Jn. 17:22; Ha. 2:5-9). In the next lesson, we will see that God's glorious presence indwells the saints of God.

Faith-N-Focus : *E-quip Your Faith*

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"The Nature of God"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Indwelling Spirit”

Introduction

The glory of God’s Spirit that was manifested in the temple of Solomon, that was revealed in Jesus Christ, and that was witnessed on the day of Pentecost, still inhabits saints today. Jesus explained that his Spirit would not only dwell with the believer but would actually indwell him (Jn. 14:17). In today’s lesson, we will see that Christ abides in the believer by his indwelling Spirit, and the fullness of Christ’s presence is experienced through being baptized and filled with the Holy Ghost.

Key Verse

“Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (Jn. 14:17).

Lesson Summary

God promised to place his law (Word, Truth) within his people (Je. 31:33; He. 8:10; 10:16). But how would God accomplish this? Paul taught that Christ (the Word of God) dwells in our hearts by faith (Ep. 3:16-17), and he abides in us through his Spirit (Ro. 8:9-16). God’s indwelling Spirit assures us that we are indeed the children of God, and teaches us to abide in Christ (Ro. 8:16; 1 Jn. 2:27). The Lord has given us “the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts” to be an inner witness and assurance of his abiding presence (2 Co. 1:21-22; 1 Jn. 4:13). Moreover, the prophet Joel declared how God would pour out his Spirit in the last days (Jl. 2:28-29). On the day of Pentecost, when the saints “were all filled with the Holy Ghost,” Peter identified their experience as the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy (Ac. 2:4, 14-18). When Jesus promised to send the Holy Ghost, he identified their experience as the baptism with the Holy Ghost (Ac. 1:5). Today, God continues to baptize with the Holy Ghost and to fill with his Spirit (Ac. 2:38-39). Moreover, we can be filled with the Holy Ghost at all times, that is, we can be re-filled again and again (Ep. 5:17-18; Ac. 4:8, 31). The significance of the indwelling Spirit is evident in the proclamation of Christ at the feast of Tabernacles. Jesus cried out, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink” (Jn. 7:37). Then he promised, “He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of **living water**” (v. 38). Jesus was referring to his life-giving Spirit, the Holy Ghost (v. 39). When he witnessed to the woman of Samaria, Jesus spoke of **living water** that would satisfy the thirsty souls of men (Jn. 4:10, 14). Clearly, Christ places his Spirit within every believer to be “a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (v. 14). As faithful followers of Christ, we should, therefore, seek to be filled with the Spirit in our daily walk with God.

Scripture Study

Indwelling Spirit – Ep. 3:16-17; Ro. 8:9-16; 1 Jn. 2:27; 2 Co. 1:21-22; 1 Jn. 4:13

Filled with the Spirit – Jl. 2:28-29; Ac. 1:5; 2:4, 14-18, 38-39; Ep. 5:17-18; Ac. 4:8, 31

Living water -- Jn. 7:37-39; 4:1-14

Conclusion

The Spirit of God is given to every believer when we are regenerated and have new life in Christ. Indeed, we are born again of the Spirit of God (Jn. 3:6-7). Being a child of God born of the Spirit, we are called to walk (live) in the Spirit in order to reap eternal life (Ga. 5:16, 25; 6:8). Living in the Spirit necessarily entails being filled with the Spirit of God. As each member of the church is baptized with the Holy Ghost and then is continually filled with the Spirit, the church is itself a living-giving force in the world embodying the Spirit of Christ in and among us.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum "Essentials"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

The Nature of God

Lesson Outlines

April 7

Topic: Holy Spirit

Texts: Jn. 1:18; 4:23-24; 14:17; 1 Co. 2:9-14; 3:16-17; 1 Jn. 4:12; Ex. 33:7-11, 20; 34:5-8, 28-35; 2 Co. 6:16; Ep. 2:21-22; 4:30; Ps. 99:1-9

Key Verse: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in Spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:24).

Main Point: God is spirit, and the Spirit is holy.

April 14

Topic: Omnipresence

Texts: Is. 40:12-22; 57:15; 66:1; 2 Ch. 16:9; Ac. 7:48-50; Ac. 17:24-28; Je. 23:23-24; Jn. 16:8-9; Ps. 139:1-10; Ja. 4:8; Mt. 28:20; He. 13:5

Key Verse: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence" (Ps. 139:7)?

Main Point: God's presence is universal but also personal in the life of every believer.

April 21

Topic: Shekinah

Texts: 1 Ki. 8:1-11; 2 Ch. 5:1-14; 7:1-3; 1 Ch. 22:5-8; 28:1-3; Mt. 17:1-9; Mk. 9:1-9; Lu. 9:27-36; Acts 1:4-5, 8; 2:1-12

Key Verse: "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one" (Jn. 17:22).

Main Point: God has placed his glory in the church through his indwelling Spirit.

April 28

Topic: Indwelling Spirit

Texts: Ep. 3:16-17; 5:17-18; Ro. 8:9-16; 1 Jn. 2:27; 4:13; 2 Co. 1:21-22; Jl. 2:28-29; Ac. 1:5; 2:4, 14-18, 38-39; 4:8, 31; Jn. 7:37-39; 4:1-14

Key Verse: "Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (Jn. 14:17).

Main Point: Christ's presence fills the church as each member is baptized and filled with the Holy Ghost.

In this month of Faith-N-Focus, we begin a new unit studying the doctrine of the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology). What is the nature of God? How should we describe God to sinners and unbelievers? In the first lesson, we will consider the nature of God – God is Spirit. Because we live in a fallen, sinful world, people often fail to recognize and accept the work of God's Spirit among mankind. The Holy Spirit permeates the entire world in which we live (Ac. 17:27-28), for he is omnipresent. His presence fills up his creation.

Although God is invisible, he has shown forth his glorious presence with physical manifestations of his Spirit. His works among men come with power and demonstration of the Spirit. Today, his glorious presence resides within the heart of every believer who follows Jesus Christ by faith and obedience. As children of God, we embody the glory of God through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Through regeneration and the baptism with the Holy Ghost, the manifestations of the Spirit in the church produce visible demonstrations of God's glory. When the saints and members of God's church are filled with the Holy Ghost, they manifest the glorious presence of Christ. God's Spirit is life-giving. As each member of the church is baptized with the Holy Ghost and then is continually filled with the Spirit, the church is itself a living-giving force in the world embodying the Spirit of Christ and manifesting the invisible God. Thus, the saints in whom the Spirit dwells are the proof of a risen, living Savior.

 To receive your free monthly subscription to Faith-N-Focus curriculum, please send your request for "E-quip Your Faith" to Rick Ferrell at sundayschoolservices@zionassemblychurchofgod.com. Along with the "Essentials" monthly summary, you will receive the weekly Student Guides. For more information about Zion Assembly Church of God, please visit our website at www.zionassemblychurchofgod.com.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"The Work of the Spirit"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Introduction

“Convicted by the Spirit”

Quoting from the *Abstract of Faith*: “Conviction is a revelation to man by the Holy Ghost of the righteous judgment of God. Through conviction, unregenerated souls see themselves as sinners before God, experience guilt, and realize their separation from Him who is holy, just, and good.” In today’s lesson, we will consider some basic observations about conviction as it relates to the work of the Holy Spirit and the mission of the church.

Key Verse

“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Ac. 2:37).

Lesson Summary

Jesus commissioned the church to proclaim the gospel throughout the world, but we are not alone in this missionary endeavor. As we declare the truth, God confirms his Word through the work of the Spirit. Jesus taught, “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is *expedient* for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (Jn. 16:7-8). First of all, an essential point about conviction is that it comes by the agency of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of God reproves or convicts the world of sin. Though we play an important part in the work of conviction in proclaiming the truth (Lu. 14:23; Ja. 5:20), the Spirit is actually the one who reproves sinners by the truth we proclaim. A good example of this point is the ministry of Stephen. When he declared the truth in the power of the Spirit, his adversaries were “cut to the heart” (Ac. 6:5, 10; 7:51, 54-55). The mission of the church relies on the work of the Spirit, indicated by Jesus’ use of the word *expedient* (v. 7). Moreover, “And when he is come” defines a change, a greater dimension of the work of the Spirit through the church in the world. Jesus departed, yet he did not leave us comfortless, without assistance, but gave his Spirit to us in order to move our missionary work forward through his conviction and reproof. Furthermore, conviction is God’s revelation in the heart of sinners, causing them to see the error of their ways. It is not merely being shamed or condemned by another. Although we can tell people that they are sinners and even shame them for their unrighteous actions, only the Holy Ghost can bring about true conviction, for it is a revelation by the Spirit whereby he shines the light of holy God into a sinner’s darkened heart (1 Jn. 1:5; Jn. 3:19). An individual’s sin and guilt must be exposed and brought to light (Ep. 5:13). Conviction is the illumination of the Spirit in the heart of sinners leading them to the truth, testifying of Jesus, and pointing them to Christ, the light of the world (Jn. 1:4, 9; 15:26; 16:13). Through the Spirit, the sinner is being drawn by the Father to the Son. Jesus taught, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (Jn. 6:44). Finally, Holy Ghost conviction changes an individual’s self-perception. In Acts 2:37, the Bible describes the experience of conviction as being *pricked*. Peter, full of the Holy Ghost (Ac. 2:4, 4:8), preached a dynamic message of Christ crucified and resurrected. When the Jews heard the Word of God, they were convicted – “pricked in their heart” (2:37). After listening to Peter’s witness, something changed in them. They no longer felt good about themselves (2 Co. 7:9). After the spiritual light of their soul was turned on, they saw themselves as guilty – as already condemned by God (Jn. 3:17-18). Thus true conviction by the Holy Ghost causes the sinner to wrestle with his personal, sinful condition.

Scripture Study

The agency of the Spirit – Jn. 16:7-8; Lu. 14:23; Ja. 5:20; Ac. 6:5-10; 7:51-56

The illumination of the Spirit – 1 Jn. 1:5; Jn. 3:19; Ep. 5:13; Jn. 1:4, 9; 6:44; 15:26; 16:13

Pricked by the Spirit – Ac. 2:36-37; 2 Co. 7:9; Jn. 3:17-18

Conclusion

The mission of the church cannot be accomplished without the conviction of the Holy Ghost. Our effectiveness in winning souls to Christ depends on his reproof. We should therefore seek to be filled with the Holy Ghost, declaring Christ and the Word of God, in order to illuminate sinners with God’s truth.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"The Work of the Spirit"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Regenerated by the Spirit”

Introduction

Regeneration (“born again,” Jn. 3:3) is a word that conveys the idea of a “new beginning.” We seldom use this word in casual conversation, but we use other words that essentially communicate the basic concept of regeneration. For example, he *restored* the antique furniture; he hired the contractor to *renovate* his home; she *renewed* her driver’s license; and the doctor *revived* her patient. When people die, they are sometimes *resuscitated* or brought to life again. Fallen man is spiritually dead, but God has provided the way in Christ for all who believe to be brought to life again – to be spiritually restored to new life or regenerated by the Spirit of God.

Key Verse

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (Jn. 3:6).

Lesson Summary

When Adam was created, “the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Ge. 2:7). Of course, Satan deceived Eve; she ate the forbidden fruit, and in turn, Adam also ate and disobeyed the Lord’s commandment. The results were physical and spiritual death. Reflecting on Adam’s disobedience and rebellion against God, the apostle Paul explained humanity’s sin condition and its consequences, saying, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Ro. 5:12). Because of sin, mankind inherited the physical penalty of death (Ge. 2:17), but also experienced the greater consequence and judgment of spiritual death, being “dead in trespasses and sins” and “by nature the children of wrath” (Ep. 2:1, 3; Ja. 1:15). Regeneration is God’s solution to this problem of spiritual death. Jesus explained it to Nicodemus in terms of being “born again” (Jn. 3:1-8). The Spirit quickens or gives spiritual life in Christ (Jn. 6:63; 11:25; Ro. 8:5-6, 10-11; 1 Co. 15:45). By the Spirit of God, a sinner is born again by faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, whereby he becomes a child of God and “is passed from death unto life” (Jn. 3:6-7; 5:24; Col. 2:12-13). Being brought from death to life is a spiritual transformation – a radical change in the heart of the believer producing a translation from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God (Jn. 3:3, 5; Col. 1:13). For this reason, the apostle Paul wrote, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Co. 5:17). Clearly, regeneration means a completely new life in Christ – a fresh, new beginning in the Lord. Thus after we are regenerated by the Spirit, we should “walk in the newness of life” in the Spirit (Ro. 6:4; 8:1, 4; Ga. 5:25), not walking after the sinful desires of the flesh (Ga. 5:16).

Scripture Study

Spiritual death – Ge. 2:7, 17; Ro. 5:12; Ep. 2:1, 3; Ja. 1:15

Spiritual life – Jn. 3:3, 5-7; 5:24; 6:63; 11:25; Ro. 8:5-6, 10-11; 1 Co. 15:45; Col. 1:13; 2:12-13

Living in the Spirit – 2 Co. 5:17; Ro. 6:4; 8:1, 4; Ga. 5:16, 25

Conclusion

The spiritual evidence of a regenerated life is the fruit of the Spirit (Ga. 5:22-23; Ep. 5:9-10). Simply put, when a person accepts Jesus Christ as his Savior, his life will change. The way he talks and behaves will be transformed even as his soul has been transformed by the Spirit. However, one should keep in mind that regeneration is not the same as sanctification. The only way a believer can continue to experience victory and power over sin is through the crucifixion of sinful flesh (Ro. 6:6). Indeed, Jesus also shed his blood for our sanctification; every child of God should embrace this by faith.

Faith-N-Focus : *E-quip Your Faith*

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"The Work of the Spirit"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Introduction

“Sanctified by the Spirit”

The essential idea in sanctification is holiness – being set apart from sin and unrighteousness. God’s will for every believer is sanctification (1 Th. 4:3). Since we are called to be holy in Christ, God wants every child of God to “know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour” (vv. 4, 7). This is a part of our “high calling” in Christ (Ph. 3:14; He. 12:14). However, though we are called to be sanctified and set apart to God, man cannot free himself from the power and dominion of sin. Only God can do this for us and in us. In today’s lesson, we will see that the Holy Spirit is the one who sanctifies the believer and delivers him from the grip of sin.

Key Verse

“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Ro. 8:13).

Lesson Summary

As followers of Christ, we must not yield ourselves to sin (Ro. 6:1-2; Ep. 4:26-27). Sin should never reign in our lives and dominate us (Ro. 6:12-14). Clearly, the responsibility to be holy and separate from sin falls upon our shoulders (v. 19). But we ourselves have no innate power to cease from sin. In fact, man’s fallen nature is prone to sin (6:20; 7:14-20). In response to this dilemma, the apostle Paul taught the flesh-Spirit conflict that must be resolved in the life of every believer (Ro. 8:4-9, 12-14; Ga. 5:16-17, 24-25). Since the Spirit and flesh work against each other, the flesh with its sinful desires and works must be put to death, crucified, or mortified (Ga. 5:19-21, 24). This second definite work of God’s grace is called sanctification. Fortunately, God provided the way for a Christian to be sanctified and delivered from the sinful flesh when he deposited his Spirit within him in regeneration (Ga. 5:16, 25; Ro. 8:9). On this basis of the indwelling Spirit, the apostle Paul implored the church at Thessalonica to live in a manner pleasing to God and consistent with the Spirit of holiness (1 Th. 4:1-8). In fact, to resist holiness is to resist the Holy Spirit abiding in us (v. 8). Accordingly, regeneration by the Spirit to new life in Christ anticipates and expects sanctification by the Spirit unto holiness. The Word of God teaches the difference between sin and righteousness (Ro. 6:13), between carnal and spiritual (Ro. 8:6), and between iniquity and holiness (Ro. 6:19). Moreover, the Word of God teaches the way of freedom and deliverance from sin through faith in the blood of Jesus Christ (Ac 26:18; He. 13:12). In brief, when we accept God’s will for our sanctification (1 Th. 4:3) and embrace God’s provision of sanctification by faith in Christ, we can both expect and experience the sanctifying grace of God in our lives. The Spirit indwelling the believer provides the agency of God’s power and deliverance from sin. By the work and enablement of the Spirit in our lives, we are sanctified in Christ in order to put to death the sinful deeds of the flesh and live holy (Ro. 15:16; 1 Co. 6:11; 1 Pe. 1:2; 2 Th. 2:13; Ro. 8:13; 2 Co. 7:1; Ro. 12:1).

Scripture Study

The flesh-Spirit dilemma – Ro. 6:1-2, 12-14, 19-20; 7:14-20; 8:4-9, 12-14; Ga. 5:16-17, 24-25

Called to holiness – 1 Th. 4:1-8; Ro. 6:13; Ro. 8:6; Ro. 6:19

Sanctified by the Spirit – Ro. 15:16; 1 Co. 6:11; 1 Pe. 1:2; 2 Th. 2:13; Ro. 8:13; 2 Co. 7:1; Ro. 12:1

Conclusion

When we come to Jesus Christ as Savior and are born again, the conflict of the flesh and Spirit indwelling us must be resolved. The Spirit that regenerates us to new life also compels us to be sanctified – to be made holy. God will not allow a believer to continue sinning, but will by his Spirit sanctify the inner man and empower him to live holy and victorious over sin and unrighteousness.

Faith-N-Focus : *E-quip Your Faith*

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"The Work of the Spirit"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Fruit of the Spirit”

Introduction

Have you ever bought a bag of fruit that looked ripe and delicious only to discover later that one piece was bad? You examined the fruit thoroughly when you made the purchase, but you could not see the inner rotteness. After a couple of days, what was hidden became self-evident. Perhaps, you noticed the obvious dark, mushy spot or maybe you smelled the curious odor when you examined it. Like the old saying goes, “One bad apple can spoil the whole bushel,” so you threw it out before it corrupted the rest. Suffice it to say, when you are ready to take a bite, picking out good fruit is essential, and recognizing bad fruit is just as important. In today’s lesson, we will consider the role of the fruit of the Spirit in the Christian life.

Key Verse

“For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth” (Ep. 5:9).

Lesson Summary

In Matthew 7:15-23, Jesus warned of false prophets who appear to be sheep when in fact they are wolves ready to devour unsuspecting souls. Not every minister who proclaims Jesus Christ is a true prophet of God (vv. 22-23). Likewise, not everyone who professes to know God and follow Christ is a genuine Christian (v. 21). For this reason, Jesus said, “Beware” (Mt. 7:15). Although we should avoid suspicion in our relationships, particularly within the church, we should not be spiritually naïve, but rather discerning. We can recognize false brethren by their fruits, because a good tree bears good fruit and a corrupt tree bears evil fruit (vv. 16-17). In fact, “a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit” (v. 18). Therefore, a tree, good or bad, is known by the fruit it produces (v. 20). The truth of God’s word will always reveal and bring to light. Though at the first recognizing deception can be difficult, in time the bad fruit will become self-evident as we continue to walk in the light of the Truth of God’s Word and Spirit (Ep. 5:6-13; 1 Jn. 4:1). The light of God’s Truth reveals and exposes “things which are done of them in secret” (Ep. 5:11-13). A child of God does not walk in sin and unrighteousness, but he produces the good fruit of the Spirit because he is born of the Spirit (1 Jn. 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:4, 18). As a child of God walks in the light manifesting the fruit of the Spirit, he will recognize deception. What is the good fruit that the Spirit produces in the life of a true believer? In his writings, the apostle Paul made a sharp distinction between what we were without Christ and who we are in Christ (Ep. 2:1-22). In Christ we are no longer servants of sin, but being free from it and now serving the Lord, we have our “fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (Ro. 6:22). The fruit of the Spirit is holiness and righteousness: separation from sin and set apart to God. The fruit of the Spirit aligns to all that is good, right, and true (Ep. 5:9). Specifically, Paul identified the fruit of the Spirit as love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (Ga. 5:22-23). Though we cannot save ourselves by our own efforts, we are saved by the grace of God to produce good works that please the Lord (Ep. 2:10). Our good works attest that we are God’s workmanship, a new creature in Christ Jesus (v. 10; 2 Co. 5:17).

Scripture Study

Good or bad fruit – Mt. 7:15-23

Recognizing deception – Ep. 5:6-13; 1 Jn. 2:29; 3:9; 4:1, 7; 5:4, 18

The good fruit – Ro. 6:22; Ep. 5:9; Ga. 5:22-23; Ep. 2:10; 2 Co. 5:17

Conclusion

A tree is known by its fruit, good or bad. As we walk in the Spirit, we exhibit the fruit of the Spirit and establish ourselves as true children of God. When we bear the good fruit, we distinguish ourselves from all that is bad in the world, enabling us to discern between good and bad, right and wrong, and truth and error.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum "Essentials"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

The Work of the Spirit

Lesson Outlines

May 5

Topic: *Convicted by the Spirit*

Texts: Jn. 16:7-8; Lu. 14:23; Ja. 5:20; Ac. 6:5-10; 7:51-56; 1 Jn. 1:5; Jn. 3:19; Ep. 5:13; Jn. 1:4, 9; 6:44; 15:26; 16:13; Ac. 2:36-37; 2 Co. 7:9; Jn. 3:17-18

Key Verse: "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Ac. 2:37).

Main Point: Conviction is a work of the Spirit revealing one's sin and guilt through the truth of Jesus Christ.

May 12

Topic: *Regenerated by the Spirit*

Texts: Ge. 2:7, 17; Ro. 5:12; Ep. 2:1, 3; Ja. 1:15; Jn. 3:3, 5-7; 5:24; 6:63; 11:25; Ro. 8:5-6, 10-11; 1 Co. 15:45; Col. 1:13; 2:12-13; 2 Co. 5:17; Ro. 6:4; 8:1, 4; Ga. 5:16, 25

Key Verse: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (Jn. 3:6).

Main Point: Regeneration is a work of the Spirit raising a sinner from spiritual death to spiritual life through faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

May 19

Topic: *Sanctified by the Spirit*

Texts: Ro. 6:1-2, 12-14, 19-20; 7:14-20; 8:4-9, 12-14; 12:1; 15:16; Ga. 5:16-17, 24-25; 1 Th. 4:1-8; 1 Co. 6:11; 1 Pe. 1:2; 2 Th. 2:13; 2 Co. 7:1

Key Verse: "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Ro. 8:13).

Main Point: Sanctification is a work of the Spirit delivering a believer from the power and dominion of sin.

May 26

Topic: *Fruit of the Spirit*

Texts: Mt. 7:15-23; Ep. 5:6-13; 1 Jn. 2:29; 3:9; 4:1, 7; 5:4, 18; Ro. 6:22; Ep. 5:9; Ga. 5:22-23; Ep. 2:10; 2 Co. 5:17

Key Verse: "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth" (Ep. 5:9).

Main Point: Bearing the good fruit of the Spirit is essential to discerning both right and wrong.

In this month of *Faith-N-Focus*, we consider the work of the Spirit, particularly in regard to salvation and victory over sin and the world. God's Spirit is working in our lives to deliver us from the clutches of sin and evil. But how does he do this? First of all, the Spirit convicts. He causes us to see our own sinfulness and guilt. This work of the Spirit enables us to understand our need for God's forgiveness and a Savior.

Second, the Spirit regenerates. He gives us spiritual life through faith in Jesus Christ. We are no longer "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ep. 2:1), but we have new life being born of the Spirit of God. Regeneration is therefore a spiritual transformation being brought from death to life. The born again believer is regenerated to walk in the Spirit in the newness of life.

Moreover, the Spirit sanctifies. He frees us from sin, delivering us from its power and dominion over us. As children of God, we are called to live holy lives. However, within ourselves we have no power over sin. Fortunately, God has given his Spirit to us, placing his Spirit in every believer when he is regenerated, in order to sanctify us within. Only through experiencing the sanctification of the Spirit can we be victorious over sin and the flesh.

Finally, God's indwelling Spirit produces the fruit of the Spirit in every born again believer. We are regenerated by the Spirit to walk in the Spirit. We are sanctified by the Spirit to enable us to walk in the Spirit and produce the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. By producing the good fruit of the Spirit, we distinguish ourselves from the world and more readily discern right and wrong.

 To receive your free monthly subscription to Faith-N-Focus curriculum, please send your request for "E-quip Your Faith" to Rick Ferrell at sundayschoolservices@zionassemblychurchofgod.com. Along with the "Essentials" monthly summary, you will receive the weekly Student Guides. For more information about Zion Assembly Church of God, please visit our website at www.zionassemblychurchofgod.com.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Spirit Baptism"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Introduction

“The Promise”

A promise is a binding commitment to fulfill one's word: an obligation to do all that one has said. These days, taking a person at his word is risky. People say one thing but then do another. A man and woman stand before witnesses to pledge their undying devotion to one another in holy matrimony, only later to break their covenant by divorce and remarriage. Politicians make fair speeches filled with appealing words – promises they will never keep. Although man's word is unreliable, God's Word is trustworthy. He will do all he has promised in his Word.

Key Verse

“For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Ac. 2:39).

Lesson Summary

Without a doubt, we are living in the last days when “perilous times shall come” (2 Ti. 3:1-5). However, in these uncertain times of great opposition to our faith, God's Word gives us “a strong consolation,” because he has made binding promises and cannot lie (He. 6:13-18; Nu. 23:19; 1 Sa. 15:29; Ti. 1:2). In fact, this world will one day pass away, but his Word will never pass away (Mt. 24:35; see also Mk. 13:31; Lu. 21:33; 2 Pe. 3:7, 10-13). The Word of God proves reliable and his promises faithful. 2 Cor. 1:18-20 teaches us that God is true and his promises also are true. God's Word is not uncertain: his Word is not “yes” one minute and “no” the next. All that he has promised to us in Christ will forever stand true. When God said it, he meant it. His Word to us is “yes” and “amen” (“so be it”)! Therefore, we can count on the Word of God, today, tomorrow, and the next day, even until the Lord comes again. God's Word will remain true for all eternity (Ps. 119:89; 1 Pe. 1:25). While the last days are indeed perilous, they also are full of promise. On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached, “But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy” (Acts 2:16-18; Jl. 2:28-29). When Jesus prepared the disciples for his departure and for their future work and ministry in the church, he prophesied of the coming of the Holy Ghost, saying, “And, behold, I send **the promise of my Father** upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high” (Lu. 24:49). Jesus referred to the Holy Ghost as “the promise of my Father.” Luke recorded these same words in Acts 1:4-5; “And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for **the promise of the Father**, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.” Again, the baptism with the Holy Ghost is the promise of the Father. Jesus said, “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” (Lu. 11:13). The Holy Spirit is the Father's promise to his children. We can be sure he will fulfill his promise and give his Spirit to all who ask.

Scripture Study

God's word is true – He. 6:13-18; Nu. 23:19; 1 Sa. 15:29; Ti. 1:2; Mt. 24:35; 2 Co. 1:18-20; Ps. 119:89; 1 Pe. 1:25
The promise of God – Ac. 2:16-18; Jl. 2:28-29; Lu. 11:13; 24:49; Ac. 1:4-5; 2:38-39

Conclusion

When the Holy Ghost was poured out on the church according to the Word of God, Peter understood that the baptism with the Holy Ghost was God's promise to every believer, even to all future generations (Ac. 2:38-39). Therefore, every believer should pray and seek to be baptized with the Holy Ghost – the promise of the Father.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Spirit Baptism"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Outpouring of the Spirit”

Introduction

In this lesson, we will examine the behind-the-scenes details surrounding the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, when Christ’s promise to baptize with the Holy Ghost was first fulfilled in the church. By reflecting on the experience of the New Testament church, we will be able to more fully understand the baptism with the Holy Ghost and build our expectation for the outpouring of the Spirit in the church today.

Key Verse

“And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit . . .” (Ac. 2:18).

Lesson Summary

Before he ascended, when Jesus promised to send the Holy Ghost (Jn. 15:26; 14:26), he told his disciples to “wait” and “tarry” for the promise of the Father” (Ac. 1:4; Lu. 24:49). They were to remain in Jerusalem until they were baptized with the Holy Ghost “not many days hence” (Ac. 1:5). However, “waiting” and “tarrying” should not be understood as passive in the sense of being idle until something occurred, but rather the apostles waited in active anticipation and expectation for the promise. For them, following Christ’s directives to wait and tarry took on a practical expression. Leading up to the day of Pentecost, the church “continued” to seek God for the fulfillment of his promise. They believed the promise and then took faithful action in order to prepare themselves to receive the Holy Ghost, praying and making supplication (Ac. 1:13-15; 2:1). Therefore, Christ’s disciples actively embraced the promise of the Spirit by faith (Ga. 3:14). True faith in the Word of God requires faithful action on our part for “faith without works is dead” (Ja. 2:17, 20, 26). Clearly, God’s promises in no way relinquish the church from responsibility; instead his promises expect faithful action and obedience from us. Today, we should not sit back and relax waiting on God to send Holy Ghost revival in the church. Instead, when we “tarry” we must embrace God’s promise by faith continually seeking the face of God for the outpouring of the Spirit among us (He. 11:6). God will surely fulfill his Word because he is faithful to keep his promises, but only those who remain faithful to God can expect to receive from the Lord (Ja. 1:6-8; He. 11:33). Furthermore, the church had unity in their waiting and tarrying. Luke, the writer of the book of *Acts*, gave emphasis to this characteristic within the fellowship of the church when they assembled to receive the promise. In regard to their praying, Luke wrote, “These all continued with one accord” – note the words “all” and “one” which indicate a comprehensive togetherness, a cohesion (1:14). All who were in the upper room had one mind (Ph. 2:2). They were pulling together (Ph. 1:27). Today, a great challenge in the church is motivating all of the church to pull in unison and move in the same direction. The apostles’ unity “continued” and persisted as they prayed for the promise of the Holy Ghost (Ac. 1:14; Ro. 12:2; Co. 4:2). On the day of Pentecost, Luke again noted the unity of the church in the disciples’ coming together – “they were **all** with **one** accord in one place” (Ac. 2:1). This context of unity was directly connected to the coming of the Holy Ghost (v. 2). In other words, to think of the outpouring of the Spirit on a divided people is absurd (Ep. 4:3). The emphasis of unity in the outpouring of the Spirit is evident in that the Spirit “filled all the house,” he “sat upon each of them,” and “they were all filled,” as opposed to a partial or limited outpouring (Ac. 2:3-4).

Scripture Study

Wait for the promise – Jn. 14:26; 15:26; Lu. 24:49; Ac. 1:4-5, 13-15

Faith to receive – Ga. 3:14; Ja. 1:6-8; 2:17, 20, 26; He. 11:6, 33

Unity in the church – Ac. 1:14; 2:1-4; Ep. 4:3; Ph. 1:27; 2:2

Conclusion

Like the New Testament church, we also should wait and tarry, praying and supplicating in order to receive the promise of the Father. Those who desire to be baptized with the Holy Ghost should seek for the promise, and by faith expect to receive the spiritual blessing. Moreover, the saints of God should join together in one accord to receive a mighty outpouring of the Spirit in the church today.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Spirit Baptism"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Introduction

“Speaking in Tongues”

Today’s subject has been a topic of widespread debate in Christian circles. Some groups have denied the authenticity of speaking in tongues in our day, limiting this practice to the era of the New Testament church. Others accept speaking in tongues but confine it to a private expression like individual prayers. Still others have misunderstood the spiritual purpose of speaking in tongues and its place in the church. In this lesson, we will clarify the role and importance of speaking in tongues.

Key Verse

“For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries” (1 Co. 14:2).

Lesson Summary

Speaking in tongues is the ecstatic utterance of a language other than one’s own, spoken by the divine enablement of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Ghost came on the day of Pentecost, the disciples were filled with the Spirit and spoke in other languages “as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Ac. 2:4). Contrary to the teaching and practice of some Christians, nowhere in the Scriptures should speaking in tongues be made fundamental to salvation. Instead, speaking in tongues is directly connected to the baptism with the Holy Ghost (Ac. 2:4, 6, 8, 11; 10:44-46; 11:15; 19:1-7; see also *Abstract of Faith* under “Speaking in Tongues”). When believers are baptized with the Holy Ghost, they always speak in tongues which confirms their experience. Tongues are an external witness of the indwelling Spirit – the Holy Ghost manifesting his abiding presence in the life of the believer (Mk. 16:17). Therefore, speaking in tongues is a normative experience among Spirit-filled Christians. Though speaking in tongues is a sign following believers, it is also a sign to unbelievers (1 Co. 14:21-23; Ac. 2:6-12). [Note: This writer has witnessed the role of speaking in tongues in bringing unbelievers to Christ. On one occasion, after the Holy Ghost had uniquely manifested himself in tongues, a sinner man came forward with his wife to accept Christ as Savior. His background was completely incompatible with the Holiness-Pentecostal tradition. As the pastor was praying with him at the altar to receive salvation, the man’s wife also prayed at the altar, simultaneously receiving the baptism with the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues.] Furthermore, tongues serve to edify the church itself. Individually, speaking in tongues builds up a believer because his spirit communicates with God in mysteries (1 Co. 14:2, 4, 14; Ro. 8:26-27). When the Holy Spirit prays and intercedes through a believer in this way, his faith is built up (Ju. 20). However, when the Spirit-inspired language is interpreted (see interpretation of tongues, 1 Co. 12:4, 10; 1 Co. 14:27-28), the tongues serve to edify all of the members of the church, fulfilling a much greater purpose in the body (1 Co. 14:5, 12-13).

Scripture Study

The witness of the Spirit – Ac. 2:4, 6, 8, 11; 10:44-46; 11:15; 19:1-7; Mk. 16:17

A sign to unbelievers – 1 Co. 14:21-23; Ac. 2:6-12

Self-edification – 1 Co. 14:2, 4, 14; Ro. 8:26-27; Ju. 20

Edifying the whole body – 1 Co. 14:5, 12-13

Conclusion

How should we think about speaking in tongues? Tongues are inseparable from the work of the Holy Ghost in the church. Holy Ghost-baptized saints will speak in tongues. In fact, when writing to the church at Corinth, Paul encouraged the saints in regard to the practice of speaking in tongues in the church (1 Co. 14:5, 18, 39). Nevertheless, excessively speaking in tongues is not an indication of superior spirituality (vv. 19, 23, 40).

Faith-N-Focus : *E-quip Your Faith*

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Spirit Baptism"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Filled with the Spirit”

Introduction

God’s plan in Jesus Christ is to indwell his people. When Jesus promised to send the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, he said, “Ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (Jn. 14:17). While God desires to dwell with his people, he desires even more for his people to remain consecrated and filled with his Spirit. Certainly, every born again believer should seek to be filled with the Spirit.

Key Verse

“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (Ep. 5:18).

Lesson Summary

On the day of Pentecost, the fullness of the Spirit came into the church through the baptism with the Holy Ghost (Jl. 2:28-29; Ac. 1:4-5; 2:1-4, 14-18). When the saints in the upper room were baptized with the Spirit and spoke in tongues, devout Jews of every nation were also in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost (2:5). The Spirit dynamically came into the room with manifestations like wind and fire, filling not only “the house where they were sitting,” but filling every believer as well (vv. 2, 4). Some 120 saints, perhaps more, received the Holy Ghost baptism with the evidence of tongues, experiencing the fullness of the Spirit in the depths of their souls. When the Jews in the city heard about this strange phenomenon and came to see what was happening, they actually heard the saints speaking the wonderful works of God in their many diverse languages (Ac. 2:6, 11; 1 Co. 12:10). This spiritual manifestation was met with mixed reviews. Realizing that all of these saints were Galileans, all of the Jews were astonished, asking, “What meaneth this?” (Ac. 2:7, 12). But some mocked this mighty move of God refusing to hear his voice, saying, “These men are full of new wine” (Is. 28:11-12; Ac. 2:13). To sinful, fleshly men, this manifestation of the Spirit was reminiscent of intoxication. Of course, Peter contended that they were not drunk at all, but rather that God poured out his Spirit upon them and they were filled with the Spirit (Ac. 2:15, 18). These saints of God were not filled with alcohol but were under the influence of the Spirit, being baptized with and full of the Holy Ghost. Intriguingly, the apostle Paul explained the will of God for the church, admonishing not to drunkenness (intoxication) but to “be filled with the Spirit” (Ep. 5:17-18). Being filled with the Spirit and being baptized with the Spirit are interrelated, yet not exactly the same. The baptism with the Holy Ghost is a one-time experience that immerses us into the fullness of the Spirit. However, as Spirit-baptized believers, we can and should be filled with the Spirit again and again. For example, after the initial outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Peter and John, along with the saints, were again filled (not baptized) with the Holy Ghost. When they prayed in one accord, the place where they were assembled shook; and then they were filled with the Spirit and spoke God’s word boldly (Ac. 4:23-32).

Scripture Study

Baptized into fullness – Jl. 2:28-29; Ac. 1:4-5; 2:1-5, 14-18

Like drunken men – Ac. 2:6-13; Is. 28:11-12

Be filled with the Spirit – Ep. 5:17-18; Ac. 4:23-32

Conclusion

Through the baptism with the Holy Ghost, God desires to fill up his church continually with his spiritual life and presence. As the Holy Spirit fills all of the members of the church individually, God fills the church with his Spirit corporately. In this way, the church functions as the temple of the living God: “an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Ep. 2:21-22; 1 Co. 3:16; 2 Co. 6:16).

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Spirit Baptism"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Empowerment”

Introduction

Have you ever felt weak or inferior as a Christian, not because of anything you did wrong, but you simply felt insufficient to meet some challenge in your life? At some point, every child of God feels this way because we are limited in our humanity. But our weaknesses are not a problem for God. The apostle Paul declared, “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me . . . for when I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Co. 12:9, 10). Jesus said, “For my strength is made perfect in weakness” (v. 9). Therefore, we are to understand that our strength is not in our humanity, but that we stand by the power of God.

Key Verse

“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Ep. 3:20).

Lesson Summary

We fight a spiritual and formidable enemy (Ep. 6:12; 2 Co. 10:3), but Jesus Christ has given us the spiritual power and authority to overcome Satan (Jn. 1:12; 2 Ti. 1:7). For this reason, the Scriptures place responsibility on us: “**Be strong** in the Lord, and in the power of his might” (Ep. 6:10); and “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, **be strong**” (1 Co. 16:13). Truly, we can be strong in the Lord when we are full of the Holy Ghost. Jesus gave us his example to follow. He showed us how to be strong in resisting the enemy’s temptations (Lu. 4:1-13). He demonstrated how we should be filled with the Holy Ghost and spiritual power. Jesus, full of the Holy Ghost, emerged from his forty-day temptation in the power of the Spirit which thereafter characterized his earthly ministry (vv. 14-15). He evidenced the power of the Spirit in his life through exercising authority over demonic spirits, sicknesses, and diseases (vv. 30-36, 39-40). However, Jesus not only demonstrated the power of God in his life and ministry, but he also gave this same power of God to the church (Lu. 24:49). The baptism with the Holy Ghost, the fulfillment of Christ’s promise (and the Father’s) to the church, empowered the saints and enabled them to speak and act beyond their human ability (Ac. 1:8; 2:4, 43) – it was a baptism of power! One of the primary reasons the Holy Ghost was given was empowerment. For example, the apostle Paul testified that spiritual power, that is, the power of the Holy Ghost, distinguished his ministry (1 Co. 2:1-5; Ro. 15:18-19). In fact, he insisted on God’s power as the basis of his effectiveness in the ministry (1 Co. 2:4-5). In the Old Testament, many were powerfully used by the Holy Ghost to perform tasks and duties for the Lord. Among them were the judges of Israel. Samson, a Nazarite and judge, illustrates this point (Jud. 13:5; 16:31). The Bible explains, “And the child grew, and the Lord blessed him. And the spirit of the Lord began to move him at times” (13:24-25). The Holy Spirit would come upon Samson mightily and he would do great exploits (14:6, 19; 15:14-15). But today, under the New Covenant with the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit fills us and his power actually indwells us. Not only does the Holy Ghost move upon us, but now his power is working in us (Ep. 1:19; 3:16, 20; Co. 1:29).

Scripture Study

Be strong – Jn. 1:12; 2 Ti. 1:7; Ep. 6:10; 1 Co. 16:13

Christ’s example – Lu. 4:1-15, 30-36, 39-40

Baptism of power – Lu. 24:49; Ac. 1:8; 2:4, 43; 1 Co. 2:1-5; Ro. 15:18-19

Indwelling power – Jud. 13:24-25; 14:6, 19; 15:14-15; Ep. 1:19; 3:16, 20; Co. 1:29

Conclusion

As Spirit-baptized believers, we have an unlimited supply of God’s power available to us (Jn. 7:38-39). Through the indwelling Holy Spirit, the power of God resides within us. When we consider that God can do anything, that nothing is beyond his power, and that Jesus Christ has all authority in heaven and in earth, we are comforted to know we also can do great things by his Spirit that dwells in us.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum "Essentials"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Spirit Baptism

Lesson Outlines

June 2

Topic: *The Promise*

Texts: He. 6:13-18; Nu. 23:19; 1 Sa. 15:29; Ti. 1:2; Mt. 24:35; 2 Co. 1:18-20; Ps. 119:89; 1 Pe. 1:25; Ac. 2:16-18; Jl. 2:28-29; Lu. 11:13; 24:49; Ac. 1:4-5; 2:38-39

Key Verse: Ac. 2:39

Main Point: The baptism with the Holy Ghost is the Father's promise to every believer.

June 9

Topic: *Outpouring of the Spirit*

Texts: Jn. 14:26; 15:26; Lu. 24:49; Ac. 1:4-5, 13-15; 2:1-4; Ga. 3:14; Ja. 1:6-8; 2:17, 20, 26; He. 11:6, 33; Ep. 4:3; Ph. 1:27; 2:2

Key Verse: Ac. 2:18

Main Point: The saints of God should faithfully unite in prayer for the outpouring of the Spirit in the church today.

June 16

Topic: *Speaking in Tongues*

Texts: Ac. 2:4, 6-12; 10:44-46; 11:15; 19:1-7; Mk. 16:17; 1 Co. 14:2-5, 12-14, 18-19, 21-23, 39-40; Ro. 8:26-27; Ju. 20

Key Verse: 1 Co. 14:2

Main Point: Spirit-baptized believers speak in tongues which confirms their spiritual experience in the Lord.

June 23

Topic: *Filled with the Spirit*

Texts: Jl. 2:28-29; Ac. 1:4-5; 2:1-18; Is. 28:11-12; Ep. 5:17-18; Ac. 4:23-32; Ep. 2:21-22; 1 Co. 3:16; 2 Co. 6:16

Key Verse: Ep. 5:18

Main Point: God wants his church to be filled completely with his Spirit.

June 30

Topic: *Empowerment*

Texts: Jn. 1:12; 2 Ti. 1:7; Ep. 6:10; 1 Co. 16:13; Lu. 4:1-15, 30-36, 39-40; 24:49; Ac. 1:8; 2:4, 43; 1 Co. 2:1-5; Ro. 15:18-19; Jud. 13:24-25; 14:6, 19; 15:14-15; Ep. 1:19; 3:16, 20; Co. 1:29

Key Verse: Ep. 3:20

Main Point: The Holy Ghost gives power to the church through his indwelling presence.

In this month of Faith-N-Focus, we will consider the baptism with the Holy Ghost. Jesus promised to send the Comforter to abide with his disciples forever (Jn. 14:16). This promise was initially fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, but the promise of this baptism is for all believers in every generation unto his coming. The saints of God should therefore unite in prayer for the outpouring of God's Spirit in the church today. God is willing to pour out his Spirit, and he knows how to baptize those who ask, but his children should earnestly seek for the promise by faith (Lu. 11:13; He. 11:6). When God pours out his Spirit, baptizing with the Holy Ghost and filling the saints with his power, Spirit-baptized believers speak in tongues. Tongues confirm one's Spirit-baptism and serve to edify the saints of God and the church.

When God baptizes with the Holy Ghost, he not only immerses believers in his Spirit but also fills his saints with his Spirit, saturating them within. God's presence is fulfilled in the church as its individual members are being filled with the Holy Ghost. Moreover, through the indwelling Spirit, the Lord empowers the church. The promise of the baptism with the Holy Ghost is also the promise of God's power in the church. God's mighty power works in the church as his saints yield themselves to the Holy Ghost. Through the power of the Spirit, we can be strong to withstand the enemy and overcome his attacks. Though we are weak humanly, we can be strong in the Lord because his Spirit empowers us from within. Thus, the Holy Ghost provides an unlimited source of power in the Lord – a power to give us victory over all opposition.

 To receive your free monthly subscription to Faith-N-Focus curriculum, please send your request for "E-quip Your Faith" to Rick Ferrell at sundayschoolservices@zionassemblychurchofgod.com. Along with the "Essentials" monthly summary, you will receive the weekly Student Guides. For more information about Zion Assembly Church of God, please visit our website at www.zionassemblychurchofgod.com.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Who Is the Holy Ghost?"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Introduction

“Comforter”

Sometimes we need a friend to talk to and encourage our hearts. Other times, we need a counselor to advise us in our decisions. Perhaps, we just need to know someone is there – that we are not left alone. Maybe we need assurance that everything is going to work out in the end. Whatever we need, “the God of all comfort” and consolation can supply (2 Co. 1:3-4). In today’s lesson, we will see that the Holy Ghost comforts us in our relationship with Jesus Christ.

Key Verse

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever” (Jn. 14:16).

Lesson Summary

For some three years, Jesus walked with his disciples teaching and instructing them in the truth. They heard his voice, saw his actions, and physically touched the Lord (1 Jn. 1:1). During that time, he daily was with them conversing and sharing in their lives and experiences. Jesus called and empowered his disciples (Mt. 10:1); he gave them commands and sent them forth to minister (Lu. 9:2-6); and he encouraged and even reproved them (Mt. 16:17, 22-23). Indeed, Jesus was their comforter – their spiritual mentor, guide and counselor. But soon, according to God’s will, he was scheduled to depart from them. Jesus told his disciples, “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (Jn. 14:2-3). Although he was leaving, he nevertheless promised not to leave them alone on their own without a comforter (v. 18). Jesus promised to send them another Comforter, the Holy Ghost (Jn. 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). The Holy Ghost took over right where Jesus left off (16:12-14). Although the Holy Spirit was different from the Lord Jesus in person, he was not different in his work and ultimate purpose. Like Jesus, he also came to comfort – thus he is “another” comforter. Therefore, the Spirit came to assist and console the saints of God in the same ways that Jesus comforted them. The Holy Spirit came to continue Christ’s role as helper and guide in the lives of his disciples. Though Jesus left them physically when he ascended to the Father, the Holy Ghost was Christ’s spiritual presence, not only abiding with the disciples, but actually indwelling them. Thus, Christ abides at the right hand of the Father in heaven, but he also abides in our hearts through his indwelling Holy Spirit. Because Jesus was leaving them, the disciples were heavyhearted and filled with sorrow (Jn. 16:5-6, 20-22). In this context of sorrow, Jesus promised to send the Holy Ghost (Jn. 16:7). Of course, this speaks to the comfort of the church today. In times of great sorrow and tribulation, we have the consolation of God’s Spirit, for Jesus said, “I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Mt. 28:20). The Holy Ghost, the Comforter, came to fill the church with Christ’s joy and peace until he comes again (Ro. 14:17; 15:13). The disciples, of course, did not want Jesus to leave them; nevertheless, it was absolutely necessary that he go away. Otherwise the other comforter, the Holy Ghost, would not come (Jn. 16:7). Clearly, the Holy Ghost is now here in a special way to comfort the church and to help every believer in his Christian walk.

Scripture Study

Jesus was comforter – 1 Jn. 1:1; Mt. 10:1; Lu. 9:2-6; Mt. 16:17, 22-23

The Holy Spirit as comforter – Jn. 14:2-3, 16, 18, 26; 15:26; 16:7, 12-14

Comforting our sorrow – Jn. 16:5-7, 20-22; Mt. 28:20; Ro. 14:17; 15:13

Conclusion

In what sense does the Holy Ghost comfort and help the church? When we are in need, the Holy Ghost will be there to lend his support. Certainly, the Holy Ghost was not sent to do everything for us. He did not come to do the work for us while we sit back and do nothing. Instead, we must take up the responsibility of Christ’s mission, and as we do so, the Holy Ghost will help us along the way, especially doing what we cannot do. He will not leave us alone, comfortless, but he will teach, guide, and lead us into God’s will in Christ. He will do mighty works through us to the glory of God. He will manifest the presence of Christ through us. Today, the Holy Ghost continues to support the saints, just as Jesus did when he walked upon this earth.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Who Is the Holy Ghost?"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Teacher”

Introduction

God has given teachers and placed them in the body of Christ. They are gifts to the church. The teaching ministry edifies the body through expounding the Word of Truth and equipping the saints for service. While teachers are instrumentally essential, even critical, for the spiritual growth and perfection of the church (Ep. 4:11-13), the primary and most important teacher in the church is the Holy Ghost. In today's lesson, we will see that the Spirit is the one who actually teaches and establishes the saints in the truth of Jesus Christ and God's Word.

Key Verse

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (Jn. 14:26).

Lesson Summary

When God spoke of a future time of restoration for the people of God, he promised to make a new covenant, saying, “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Je. 31:31-34). No longer would the Word of God be written (engraved) merely in tables of stone, but it would be written inwardly – in fleshy tables of men's hearts by the Spirit of God (2 Co. 3:3-8). Under this new covenant through Jesus Christ, the true knowledge of God cannot be taught by the precept of men but by the Holy Ghost himself indwelling us (Is. 29:13; He. 8:10-11; 1 Jn. 2:26-27). The Spirit writes (engraves) the Word of God upon our hearts. Furthermore, God has placed his Spirit within us to be an ever-abiding Teacher. When Jesus promised the Holy Ghost, he said, “He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (Jn. 14:26). The Spirit's work is teaching. He will give us understanding in all things – whatever we need from God in order to fulfill the mission of Christ and the church. Specifically, the Holy Ghost will teach us all things pertaining to Christ and his teachings (Jn. 15:26; 16:14-15). Moreover, until the Spirit reveals the truth of Jesus Christ within our hearts, we have not learned Christ, heard him, and been taught by him (Ep. 4:20-21). The knowledge of the truth is therefore more than head-knowledge and knowing facts about Jesus Christ; it is a relational, spiritual knowledge of God's saving grace and his love in our hearts (Ro. 5:5; Ep. 3:19). Finally, the Holy Ghost is the one who guides the church into all truth. Jesus plainly taught his apostles, saying, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now” (Jn. 16:12). Jesus left many things unsaid – truths that the Holy Ghost would later reveal to the apostles from the Word of God: “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth” (v. 13). The Holy Ghost would even reveal “things to come,” future insights relevant to the church (v. 13). The apostle Paul explained that the Spirit of God is the key to discerning the depths of the knowledge of God (1 Co. 2:9-14). While the wisdom of the natural man is limited, the Holy Spirit is unlimited in his ability to reveal Godly wisdom and give spiritual understanding to the saints. Since the Word of God was divinely inspired and spoken by the Holy Ghost (2 Ti. 3:16; 2 Pe. 1:21), we need the Spirit to reveal and unlock the depths of the knowledge of God's Word in the church today. Certainly, as we rely on the Spirit of truth for guidance and direction, he will take what is of Christ and reveal it to us from God's Word (Jn. 16:15).

Scripture Study

Written inwardly – Je. 31:31-34; 2 Co. 3:3-8; Is. 29:13; He. 8:10-11; 1 Jn. 2:26-27

Learning Christ – Jn. 14:26; 15:26; 16:14-15; Ep. 4:20-21; Ro. 5:5; Ep. 3:19

The revealer – Jn. 16:12-13; 1 Co. 2:9-14; 2 Ti. 3:16; 2 Pe. 1:21; Jn. 16:15

Conclusion

As disciples and followers of Jesus Christ, we never stop learning about God and growing in the knowledge of his love and truth. Even the most knowledgeable and spiritually established among us still have something to learn in their relationship with Christ. Therefore, all of the members of the church are students of God's Word, and the Holy Ghost is our Teacher.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Who Is the Holy Ghost?"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Intercessor”

Introduction

Jesus taught “that men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Lu. 18:1). We should “pray without ceasing” and daily intercede with God, making our petitions known (1 Th. 5:17; 1 Ti. 2:1; Ph. 4:6). As saints of God filled with the Spirit, not only do we pray, but the Spirit also prays with us on our behalf and through us for others. As we seek God, the Spirit is our intercessor. In today’s lesson, we will see why we need the intercession of the Spirit when we pray to the Father.

Key Verse

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Ep. 6:18).

Lesson Summary

Why do we need the Holy Spirit to make intercession when we pray? First of all, we do not always know how we should pray or for what we should pray (Ro. 8:26). Have you ever come to a spiritual roadblock or to a point that seemed to be a dead-end in your life, and you needed divine direction and guidance because you were uncertain of what to do next? Even when the will of God is clear, the specifics surrounding his will may not be so clear (1 Co. 2:11). We are therefore limited in our human understanding of what and how to pray. In regard to this, Paul used himself as an example when writing of his own infirmities and weaknesses. At one point, Paul was afflicted and prayed three times for his deliverance, but the Lord would not take this affliction from him. Instead, the Lord promised to give him sufficient grace (2 Co. 12:7-9). Clearly, Paul wanted to be free from his “thorn in the flesh,” but God had something different in mind. What we think is best, our perspective, does not always align to God’s mind and thinking. When we do not understand the perfect will of God, the Spirit helps and assists us as we pray. Moreover, he prays and intercedes in ways that go far beyond our human ability in order to make our praying effective (Ja. 5:16; He. 4:15-16). Humanly, we cannot ascend up to God (Jn. 3:13). Instead, when we pray, we rely on God to condescend to our lowly condition (Ps. 8:4; Ps. 136:23; Lu. 1:48). However, when the Holy Ghost prays on our behalf, he translates our prayers uniquely and communicates our need directly to God. Paul described the Spirit’s intercession as “groanings which cannot be uttered” (Ro. 8:26). “Groanings” indicate intercession from deep within the believer. The indwelling Spirit prays in and through us with groanings that surpass any words we ourselves can speak, clearly distinguishing his prayers from our own. When Paul instructed the saints to be strong and spiritually armored, he admonished them to pray in the Spirit: “Praying always with all prayer and supplication **in the Spirit**” (Ep. 6:18). This kind of praying is faith-building (Jude 20). Finally, when we pray in the Spirit, we receive great consolation and comfort. God searches our hearts as we pray. Our own prayers fall short of God’s perfect will, therefore we need the Holy Spirit to help us because he always prays in perfect agreement with the will of God (Ro. 8:27). Although we might not understand his groanings, God knows the mind of the Spirit: he understands the utterances of the Spirit and knows exactly what we are praying when we cry, groan, weep, and speak in tongues. When we consider all three of these aspects of praying in the Spirit, we see how important the Spirit is in our prayer life. We need the Spirit to make intercession for us “according to the will of God” (1 Jn. 5:14-15).

Scripture Study

The Spirit helps us – Ro. 8:26; 1 Co. 2:11; 2 Co. 12:7-9

His groanings – Ro. 8:26; Ja. 5:16; He. 4:15-16; Ep. 6:18; Jude 20

God’s will – Ro. 8:27; 1 Jn. 5:14-15

Conclusion

Every believer desires the assurance of knowing that “all things work together for good” (Ro. 8:28). But we cannot presume the blessings of Romans 8:28 without the operation revealed in verses 26-27. Only as we pray and intercede by the Holy Ghost can we be fully persuaded that we are praying according to the will of God and have the full assurance that God is working on our behalf “for good.”

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Who Is the Holy Ghost?"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Witness”

Introduction

In today's lesson, we will see the importance of the Holy Ghost in the witness of the church. The Spirit is vital to the success of our mission and evangelism because he is the life and power of our witness. He gives force and impetus to our efforts, enabling us to be true, effective witnesses of Jesus Christ in the world.

Key Verse

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Ro. 8:16).

Lesson Summary

The writer of Hebrews explained that the Holy Spirit is a witness of Christ to us, not an external witness only, but an *indwelling* witness (He. 10:15-16). “Because the Spirit is truth,” the Spirit of God always gives witness to the truth *within* the believer (1 Jn. 5:6-10). His witness always agrees with and confirms the Word of God (v. 7). Thus, every true child of God has the *inner* witness of the Spirit of truth abiding in him (Jn. 14:17; Ro. 8:14-16). Regarding the ministry of the Spirit, Jesus taught that the Spirit of truth would speak to the church, not of himself, but rather declaring the things pertaining to Christ and his church (Jn. 16:13-14). The Spirit has a voice. Historically, the Spirit's ministry through holy prophets has been an important part of God's plan for the church (2 Pe. 1:21). The Spirit speaks specifically to the needs in the church in every generation where believers will receive his wise counsel (1 Co. 2:13). When writing to Timothy, the apostle Paul declared, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith” (1 Ti. 4:1). The Holy Ghost spoke specifically to warn the church of a falling away (see also 2 Ti. 3:1; 4:4; 2 Th. 2:3). Warnings are an important part of the Spirit's witness to the church especially in times of apostasy (Re. 1:10, 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). Moreover, not only does the Spirit speak to the church within the fellowship of the saints, but the Holy Ghost also speaks through the church to the world of sinners, the unchurched, and the scattered sheep. Jesus assured us that the Holy Ghost would fill our mouths with the right words when we give our defense of the gospel (Mt. 10:17-20; Lu. 12:11-12). We can therefore depend on the Holy Ghost to speak a true witness of Christ through us (Jn. 15:26). However, since the Holy Ghost is our inner witness, we must remain filled with his Spirit after being baptized with the Holy Ghost. Only when our testimony is saturated with the Holy Ghost are we assured of being true, effective witnesses of Jesus Christ. Finally, the apostles were eye-witnesses of Christ's ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension (Ac. 2:21-22, 25; Lu. 1:1-2; 24:46-48; 2 Pe. 1:16). Their witness was authorized by Jesus Christ (Mt. 28:18-20), but also empowered by the Holy Ghost (Ac. 1:8). Although the apostles were Christ's eye-witnesses, the Spirit himself was/is God's witness having raised Jesus from the dead (Ro. 8:11). Therefore, we are not eye-witnesses, but we are Christ's faithful witnesses, having received the same power and anointing of the Holy Ghost, who not only raised up Christ but has quickened us spiritually through faith in Jesus (Ac. 5:32; Ep. 2:1, 5-6).

Scripture Study

The inner witness of the Spirit – He. 10:15-16; 1 Jn. 5:6-10; Jn. 14:17; Ro. 8:14-16

The Spirit speaks to the church – Jn. 16:13-14; 2 Pe. 1:21; 1 Co. 2:13; 1 Ti. 4:1; Re. 1:10; 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22

The Spirit speaks through the church – Mt. 10:17-20; Lu. 12:11-12; Jn. 15:26

We are his witnesses – Ac. 2:21-22, 25; Lu. 1:1-2; 24:46-48; 2 Pe. 1:16; Ro. 8:11; Ac. 1:8; 5:32; Ep. 2:1, 5-6

Conclusion

The world today desperately needs a true witness of Jesus Christ. With some seven billion inhabitants on the face of the earth, fulfilling the mission of the church is humanly impossible. Therefore, we must rely on the Holy Ghost to empower our witness and help us finish Christ's mission. Clearly, he came for this purpose.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

“Essentials”

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Who Is the Holy Ghost?

Lesson Outlines

July 7

Topic: *Comforter*

Texts: 1 Jn. 1:1; Mt. 10:1; Lu. 9:2-6; Mt. 16:17, 22-23; Jn. 14:2-3, 16, 18, 26; 15:26; 16:7, 12-14; Jn. 16:5-7, 20-22; Mt. 28:20; Ro. 14:17; 15:13

Key Verse: Jn. 14:6

Main Point: The Holy Ghost comforts us in our relationship with Jesus Christ.

July 14

Topic: *Teacher*

Texts: Je. 31:31-34; 2 Co. 3:3-8; Is. 29:13; He. 8:10-11; 1 Jn. 2:26-27; Jn. 14:26; 15:26; 16:12-15; Ep. 4:20-21; Ro. 5:5; Ep. 3:19; 1 Co. 2:9-14; 2 Ti. 3:16; 2 Pe. 1:21

Key Verse: Jn. 14:26

Main Point: The Holy Ghost reveals Jesus Christ and teaches the depths of the knowledge of God.

July 21

Topic: *Intercessor*

Texts: Ro. 8:26-28; 1 Co. 2:11; 2 Co. 12:7-9; Ja. 5:16; He. 4:15-16; Ep. 6:18; Jude 20; 1 Jn. 5:14-15

Key Verse: Ep. 6:18

Main Point: The Holy Ghost prays for us making intercession to the Father on our behalf.

July 28

Topic: *Witness*

Texts: He. 10:15-16; 1 Jn. 5:6-10; Jn. 14:17; Ro. 8:14-16; Jn. 16:13-14; 2 Pe. 1:21; 1 Co. 2:13; 1 Ti. 4:1; Re. 1:10; 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; Mt. 10:17-20; Lu. 12:11-12; Jn. 15:26; Ac. 2:21-22, 25; Lu. 1:1-2; 24:46-48; 2 Pe. 1:16; Ro. 8:11; Ac. 1:8; 5:32; Ep. 2:1, 5-6

Key Verse: Ro. 8:16

Main Point: The Holy Ghost enables us to be true, effective witnesses of Jesus Christ in the world.

In this month of Faith-N-Focus, we will continue our study of the person and work of the Spirit. The Holy Ghost is our comforter, teacher, intercessor, and witness. The Spirit comforts us in that he helps us in all areas of our lives where we need counsel, direction, and strength. When Jesus ascended back to the Father, he did not leave the church comfortless, but he and the Father sent the Holy Ghost to help us fulfill the will of God in our lives, individually and corporately.

The Spirit also teaches us, revealing Christ and God's will for his church. Although God calls and uses human instruments to teach his Word to the saints of God, only the Holy Ghost alone can reveal to us the depths of the knowledge of God's love. Indeed, the Spirit teaches a heart-knowledge of God, rather than a head-knowledge alone. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Ro. 5:5).

Not only is the Spirit our comforter and teacher, but he is also our intercessor, praying for us making intercession to the Father on our behalf. We pray to God, but the Spirit also prays. The impact of his praying is that he always prays according to the will of God. Therefore, the church cannot afford to pray without his divine assistance.

Finally, the Holy Ghost is our inner, ever-abiding witness. He gives witness to the truth of Jesus Christ, speaking both to the church and speaking through the church to the world. The Spirit empowers our testimony and enables us to be true, effective witnesses of Jesus Christ in the world. Only by his help will we be able to fulfill Christ's mission in and through the church.

 To receive your free monthly subscription to Faith-N-Focus curriculum, please send your request for "E-quip Your Faith" to Rick Ferrell at sundayschoolservices@zionassemblychurchofgod.com. Along with the "Essentials" monthly summary, you will receive the weekly student guides. For more information about Zion Assembly Church of God, please visit our website at www.zionassemblychurchofgod.com.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Spiritual Gifts"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Introduction

“Edification of the Body”

When writing to the church in Corinth, Paul stated, “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant” (1 Co. 12:1, 8-10). Why did the Lord place spiritual gifts in the church? The apostle Paul did not want the saints to misunderstand the function and purpose of these gifts. By explaining God’s will concerning spiritual gifts, the saints would know how the gifts should operate in the church, and at the same time be able to discern the spirit of error. In today’s lesson, we will examine God’s purpose in the operation of spiritual gifts.

Key Verse

“Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church” (1 Co. 14:12).

Lesson Summary

Paul taught the principle of the edification of the body as an objective/goal for the church (Ep. 4:12). Jesus Christ wants his body, his church, to be edified, built up, and established in the faith (Ep. 4:13). Since the church is not one member but many members in one body, each individual member should seek to benefit the whole body (1 Co. 12:14, 20). In the same way that each part of the physical body serves to support the needs of the whole man, each individual member of the church should serve to build up the corporate whole of the church. For example, we should build each other up through cultivating love and peace among ourselves (Ro. 14:19; 12:10; He. 10:24), by comforting and supporting each other (1 Th. 5:11, 14), and by speaking gracious words of encouragement to one another (Ep. 4:29; He. 10:25). However, an unhealthy body is one in which a particular member becomes sick, no longer serving to strengthen the body, but rather draining life from it. The church at Corinth was spiritually immature and prone to fleshly attitudes and behaviors (1 Co. 3:1-3). Paul wrote to the church to correct them on many divisive issues, spiritual gifts being one of them. He wrote to instruct them and to clarify the work of the Spirit and spiritual gifts. God has given a variety of spiritual gifts, but the same Holy Ghost operates all of them (1 Co. 12:1, 4-6, 11) – that is, there are many gifts but one mind of the Spirit. Paul taught edification as a basic guiding principle in the operation of spiritual gifts in the church. As we “covet earnestly the best gifts” (1 Co. 12:31), we should always seek to edify the church above our own will and desires (1 Co. 14:3-5, 12, 26). The gifts of the Spirit manifest through individual members, not only for their own edification, but even more so for the profit of the whole church (1 Co. 12:7; 14:5). The operation of the gifts should benefit all of the members, rather than satisfying the will of one or two. Moreover, the Lord distributes spiritual gifts among the members of the church in such a way as to unite the body of Christ (1 Co. 12:24-26). “But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him” (v. 18) – and he has set them in the body with gifts. However, the spiritual gifts are not for the individual’s use; for such use would produce division and disrupt the harmony and unity of the church. But the Spirit operates the gifts through individual believers to produce mutual care and support among all (v. 25). In this way, the whole church suffers and rejoices together, sharing a common experience in the Spirit (v. 26).

Scripture Study

The principle of edification – Ep. 4:12-13, 29; 1 Co. 12:14, 20; Ro. 12:10; 14:19; He. 10:24-25; 1 Th. 5:11, 14

Edification through spiritual gifts – 1 Co. 3:1-3; 12:1, 4-7, 11, 31; 14:3-5, 12, 26

The unity of the body – 1 Co. 12:18, 24-26

Conclusion

The spiritual gifts are given for the good of the whole body. They should operate within the church to build up and unite, not tear down and divide. In 1 Co. 13:1-13, Paul went on to explain that the key to edification in the operation of spiritual gifts is love. When the operation of spiritual gifts is motivated by love, the gifts will function to edify the body of Christ.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Spiritual Gifts"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Introduction

“Wisdom and Knowledge”

Throughout the Scriptures, God gave certain individuals special gifts of wisdom and knowledge to help them in their service to him. Bezaleel was filled with the Spirit “in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship” for the building of the tabernacle (Ex. 35:30-35). The prophet Daniel was a man full of godly wisdom, knowledge, and understanding who became a chief ruler in Babylon (Da. 5:5-14), and of course, the wisdom and knowledge of King Solomon is well known (1 Ki. 3:5-12). Today, God has given us spiritual gifts of both wisdom and knowledge in order to help us serve Christ and build up his church (1 Co. 12:8).

Key Verse

“For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding” (Pr. 2:6).

Lesson Summary

“For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit” (1 Co. 12:8). The apostle Paul appropriately listed wisdom and knowledge at the beginning of the spiritual gifts, not because they are more important than the others but likely because they are the basis of understanding among the spiritual gifts – a wise place to begin. Wisdom and knowledge are similar, and often operate in an interrelated way (Ep. 1:17; Co. 1:9), yet they are distinct and separate attributes. So what are the differences between wisdom and knowledge? “Wisdom” (*sophia*) indicates a depth or quality of “understanding” (1 Co. 2:7, 10, 13), while “knowledge” (*gnosis*) indicates an increase or a quantity of “insight” (Co. 1:10). Wisdom is the foundation of all spiritual knowledge and understanding. A wise man seeks the knowledge of God, but a fool refuses his knowledge and instruction (Pr. 1:5, 7, 22; 15:14). For the sake of distinction, wisdom has the capacity to grow in knowledge, but knowledge without wisdom may prove unskillful, even destructive. For example, knowledge means comprehending the right answer; wisdom means the ability to understand and communicate (explain) the answer. Knowledge understands what to say; but wisdom knows when and how to say it. Thus, knowledge should **build** upon wisdom (Pr. 4:7). Solomon, who God endowed with wisdom, explained this **building** principle in Proverbs 24:3-5. Literally speaking, the wisdom (the “know how”) to construct a building is necessary in order to build a house; then after it is built, further knowledge is necessary to finish and beautify the rooms throughout it (vv. 3-4). Knowledge builds upon wisdom. Likewise, wisdom is comparable to being strong; whereas knowledge is like becoming stronger and stronger (v. 5). Again, knowledge builds upon wisdom. Clearly, wisdom and knowledge are interrelated and should complement one another. We need both gifts operating within the church. Paul’s unique designation of these special gifts, referring to them in terms of “the word” of wisdom and knowledge, demonstrates that God’s Spirit supplies both wisdom and knowledge through individual members of the body for the edification of the whole church. “The word” indicates something spoken. In these gifts, the Holy Spirit enables a believer to speak and communicate an understanding needed within the body of Christ. Therefore, these gifts clearly are not operated by the Spirit for the individual’s benefit alone, since both gifts are manifested as “the word,” and words are spoken in order to be heard. The Holy Ghost then moves through one member to *speak* wisdom or to *speak* knowledge for the benefit of the other members. Furthermore, “the word” also implies the written Word of God, thus, the Spirit enables an individual believer to understand wisdom and knowledge consistent with the Holy Scriptures, and as a result, to speak by the gift. Thus, these gifts of the Spirit will never contradict the principles of sound teaching based on the Holy Scriptures, for the Spirit always agrees with the Word of God.

Scripture Study

Examples of wisdom and knowledge – Ex. 35:30-35; Da. 5:5-14; 1 Ki. 3:5-12

Comparing wisdom and knowledge – Ep. 1:17; Co. 1:9-10; 1 Co. 12:8; 2:7, 10, 13; Pr. 1:5, 7, 22; 15:14; 4:7; 24:3-5

Conclusion

The church needs wisdom and knowledge to fulfill its mission, but this means individual members of the body must be yielded to God as instruments of the Spirit (Ro. 6:13). God desires to speak through us words of wisdom and knowledge to give help and guidance to our ministries; but we must be spiritually prepared to be used of the Spirit (2 Ti. 2:21).

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Spiritual Gifts"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Introduction

“Faith”

How important is faith to every believer? How important is faith in the life of the church? In Hebrews 11:6, faith is essential to our acceptance with God, for we cannot please him unless we believe in him (Jn. 3:16). Truly, we cannot serve the Lord and follow him in discipleship without genuine faith and trust in Jesus Christ. In today’s lesson, we will consider the importance of faith itself and the significance of the spiritual gift of faith.

Key Verse

“But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (He. 11:6).

Lesson Summary

Because faith in Jesus Christ is required for salvation, faith is a gift of God’s grace. That is, every man has the capacity to believe the gospel and follow faithfully in Christ’s service. When Paul wrote to the saints in Rome, explaining about gifts of grace functioning in the body of Christ, he explained that God has distributed to every believer “the measure of faith” or “a measure of faith.” “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man *the measure of faith*” (Ro. 12:3). Paul was explaining that the gifts of God are just that, gifts given to us from the Lord. We are not so special in and of ourselves. Instead, God has blessed and equipped us by his grace with special abilities in order to serve him by faith. So every member of the body has the faith to serve the Lord and benefit the whole church in some unique way, because “God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith” (Ro. 12:3-6). Thus, none are excluded in God’s plan, but every member of the body has the faith it takes to please God. “The measure of faith” enables an individual to believe in God, embrace his Word, trust in Jesus Christ, obey his commandments, and to serve the Lord faithfully. In other words, when God calls a person to follow Jesus Christ and serve him, he also supplies him with the necessary faith to please the Lord in all things. “The measure of faith” itself is therefore a gift of God’s grace. How does faith impact the church, its mission and ministry? Faith in Jesus Christ is powerful – it can move mountains (Mt. 21:17-22). Though Jesus referred to a literal mountain when teaching his disciples about faith, he actually meant that any major obstacle in our lives could be moved through faith. By faith, nothing is impossible with God (17:20); therefore, Jesus compelled us to believe in him, abide in him, and ask in his name (Jn. 14:1; 15:7; 16:23-24), for great and mighty works are ours for the asking (Jn. 14:12-14). To help the church reach its fullest potential, God has given the spiritual gift of faith as a special, divine enablement to believe in God’s Word and to receive freely from the Lord (1 Co. 12:9). Reasonably, this gift could be exercised by the Spirit through an individual in order to receive a blessing from the Lord personally or to administer a blessing upon another member of the body. Either way, the gift serves to edify and build up the body of Christ, fulfilling the joy of the Lord in the church. Genuine faith is spiritually productive – it produces good works through the believer that validates his faith (Ja. 2:17-26). Therefore, anytime this spiritual gift operates through a member of the body, something profitable is taking place in the life of the church: prayers are being answered; souls are turning to Christ; saints are being encouraged; and many other blessings are being received.

Scripture Study

The measure of faith – He. 11:6; Jn. 3:16; Ro. 12:3-6

The power of faith – Mt. 17:20; 21:17-22; Jn. 14:1, 12-14; 15:7; 16:23-24

The spiritual gift of faith – 1 Co. 12:9; Ja. 2:17-26

Conclusion

Indeed, faith itself is a gift of God, and faith in God is powerful. Clearly, when the spiritual gift of faith is operating through individual members of the body, the church is strengthened because faith in Christ produces good works among us. When we see God working in the church by the gift, the faith of the whole church is emboldened to continue asking and believing for even greater works. In this way, the spiritual gift of faith operating in the church helps the body of Christ to grow in faith and proves essential in fulfilling the mission of the church.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Spiritual Gifts"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Introduction

“Healings and Miracles”

The world is filled with suffering, needy people. In Matthew 9:35, Jesus had been travelling village to village, teaching, preaching, and healing the sick. At one point, Jesus looked on the multitude and was overwhelmed by what he witnessed. The people were like sheep without a shepherd. There were so many needy people everywhere that one man simply could not minister to them all (vv. 36-38). In today's lesson, we will see that the Spirit has placed the gifts of healing and the working of miracles in the body of Christ in order to help us minister to those in need and to magnify the name of Jesus.

Key Verse

“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Ep. 3:20).

Lesson Summary

The Lord is our healer (Ps. 103:1-3). A major part of Jesus' earthly ministry was healing the sick and diseased (Mt. 8:13-17). He provided healing for all through his atoning work – through his sacrifice when he shed his blood and died on the cross. Moreover, Jesus suffered and died for the healing of the whole man: mind, soul, spirit, and body. By his stripes we are (were) healed (Is. 53:4-5; 1 Pe. 2:24). Healing is therefore possible for everyone who believes in Christ (Mk. 9:23). While healing is provided through Christ, it is accomplished by the power of the Spirit. Jesus himself healed the sick by the power of the Holy Spirit, and he promised to baptize every believer with that same Spirit and power (Jn. 1:32-34; Lu. 4:18; Ac. 1:5, 8; 2:39). In fact, the Holy Spirit has placed “gifts” of healing in the body of Christ (1 Co. 12:9). When Paul referred to healing, he wrote in terms of “gifts” rather than “gift.” Since the Spirit demonstrates many healing gifts through individual members of the body as he wills (vv. 7, 11), we can conclude that God can and does heal all types of sicknesses, diseases, and oppressions (addictions, mental illnesses, cancers, emotional scars, to name a few) by the Holy Spirit through faith in Christ. We should consider, however, that healings in this present world are not entire or absolute. Though someone is completely healed of an illness (Ac. 3:16), his body remains imperfect. For example, the Lord may heal my broken bones, so that I walk again, yet I still suffer with arthritis in my body. Also, the person through whom the gifts of healing flow should not be confused with the person being healed. In other words, the Spirit could use me to bring healing to another person, while I continue to suffer through my own infirmity (see the apostle Paul's suffering in 2 Co. 12:7-9). Such distinctions only serve to remind us that the gifts of healing are not ours to exercise as we please, but the gifts are operated by the Spirit through members of the body as it pleases God (1 Co. 12:11, 18). Likewise, the Spirit also gives the working of miracles for the edification of the whole church and for the glory of Jesus Christ (1 Co. 12:10). Miracles are indeed supernatural works of God's Spirit and power. Although healings and miracles are in many ways similar, for many healings are nothing short of miraculous signs (Jn. 4:46-54), perhaps the primary distinguishing mark of a miracle is that it defies human explanation, leaving us in awe and wonder of God's mighty power and glory (Lu. 8:25; 9:42-43; Jn. 2:23; 6:14; 7:31). Consider, Jesus turned water into wine (Jn. 2:1-11), multiplied the loaves and fishes (Lu. 9:12-17), calmed the raging storm (Mt. 8:24-27), walked on water (Mk. 6:47-51), cast out devils (Lu. 8:26-37), and even raised the dead to life again (Jn. 11:32-45). Through the spiritual gift of the working of miracles, Jesus can still do mighty wonders by his Spirit in the church today. Since the gift of miracles is the work of the Spirit and not of man, this gift should never exalt an individual member of the body but rather bring glory and honor to Jesus Christ (Ac. 8:9-24).

Scripture Study

Gifts of healing – Ps. 103:1-3; Mt. 8:13-17; Is. 53:4-5; 1 Pe. 2:24; Mk.9:23; Jn. 1:32-34; Lu. 4:18; Ac. 1:5, 8; 2:39; 1 Co. 12:7, 9, 11, 18; Ac. 3:16; 2 Co. 12:7-9

Working of miracles --1 Co. 12:10; Jn. 4:46-54; Lu. 8:25; 9:42-43; Jn. 2:23; 6:14; 7:31; Ac. 8:9-24

Conclusion

By the gifts of healing and the working of miracles, God's Spirit is powerful and active in and through the church enabling us to fulfill Christ's mission in the world. Certainly, the needs of mankind are much greater than Zion Assembly can humanly fill, but God's Spirit is able to do above and beyond all we can possibly imagine (Ep. 3:20).

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum "Essentials"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Spiritual Gifts

Lesson Outlines

August 4

Topic: *Edification of the Body*

Texts: Ep. 4:12-13, 29; 1 Co. 3:1-3; 12:1, 4-7, 11, 14, 18, 20, 24-26, 31; 14:3-5, 12, 26; Ro. 12:10; 14:19; He. 10:24-25; 1 Th. 5:11, 14

Key Verse: 1 Co. 14:12

Main Point: Spiritual gifts should function to edify the body of Christ.

August 11

Topic: *Wisdom and Knowledge*

Texts: Ex. 35:30-35; Da. 5:5-14; 1 Ki. 3:5-12; Ep. 1:17; Co. 1:9-10; 1 Co. 12:8; 2:7, 10, 13; Pr. 1:5, 7, 22; 15:14; 4:7; 24:3-5

Key Verse: Pr. 2:6

Main Point: Wisdom and knowledge are spiritual gifts of inspired understanding that help us to serve Christ and build up his church.

August 18

Topic: *Faith*

Texts: He. 11:6; Jn. 3:16; Ro. 12:3-6; Mt. 17:20; 21:17-22; Jn. 14:1, 12-14; 15:7; 16:23-24; 1 Co. 12:9; Ja. 2:17-26

Key Verse: He. 11:6

Main Point: The spiritual gift of faith provides the divine enablement to believe God's Word and to receive from the Lord.

August 25

Topic: *Healings and Miracles*

Texts: Ps. 103:1-3; Mt. 8:13-17; Is. 53:4-5; 1 Pe. 2:24; Mk.9:23; Jn. 1:32-34; Lu. 4:18; Ac. 1:5, 8; 2:39; 1 Co. 12:7, 9-11, 18; Ac. 3:16; 2 Co. 12:7-9; Jn. 4:46-54; Lu. 8:25; 9:42-43; Jn. 2:23; 6:14; 7:31; Ac. 8:9-24

Key Verse: Ep. 3:20

Main Point: The gifts of healing and the working of miracles help us to minister powerfully and effectively in a world filled with needs.

In this month of Faith-N-Focus, we continue our study of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit looking at spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts are given for the edification of the body of Christ. Because these gifts operate in and through individual members of the body, some members may think specific gifts belong to them to be exercised at will. But to the contrary, rather than our exercising the gifts, the Spirit operates the gifts according to his will. From this perspective, the gifts have more influence over us than we have over the gifts, since we are instrumental rather than self-initiating in the work of the Lord. When the operation of spiritual gifts is motivated by divine love, the gifts will function to edify the body of Christ.

The Spirit gives both wisdom and knowledge providing the members with special understanding in order to accomplish our mission and ministry in the world. Moreover, the spiritual gift of faith supplies us with the divine enablement to believe God's Word and to receive from the Lord. Since faith is pivotal to receiving from God, this gift is indispensable for the building up of the church. The gifts of healing and the working of miracles help us to minister powerfully in a world filled with needs. Many people are suffering in various ways: spiritually, physically, mentally, emotionally, and even financially. During Jesus' earthly ministry, he performed many wonderful and miraculous works. Through the gifts of healing and miracles, the members of the church continue in the work of Jesus Christ, meeting needs and magnifying the name of the Lord. The members of the church should seek to be used by the Holy Spirit in order to edify the whole body.

 To receive your free monthly subscription to Faith-N-Focus curriculum, please send your request for "E-quip Your Faith" to Rick Ferrell at sundayschoolservices@zionassemblychurchofgod.com. Along with the "Essentials" monthly summary, you will receive the weekly Student Guides. For more information about Zion Assembly Church of God, please visit our website at www.zionassemblychurchofgod.com.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Spiritual Gifts II"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Todd D. McDonald, Writer

Introduction “Prophecy and Discernment”

In 1 Corinthians 12:10, Paul identified the gift of prophecy and the gift of discerning of spirits. In today’s lesson, a general explanation of these two gifts will be provided, and then the relationship of these gifts to each other will be explained. As we will see, these gifts are essential to the healthy functioning and spiritual balance of the church.

Key Verse

“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith” (Ro. 12:6).

Lesson Summary

First, what is the gift of prophecy? Down through the ages, God has spoken by his Spirit through prophets revealing his will for mankind (He. 1:1-2; 2 Pe. 1:21). Although the *office* of prophet is no longer needed since the foundation of the church has been laid (Ep. 2:20; 1 Co. 3:10), God nevertheless speaks through “prophets” today. We typically call them “preachers.” Moreover, though God has finished speaking in as far as the Holy Scriptures are complete, he continues to speak through individuals by his Spirit to the church today through the gift of prophecy (Ro. 12:6). The Holy Ghost anoints individual believers to speak God’s word with power and authority (1 Co. 2:4-5; 1 Th. 1:5). In the gift of prophecy, believers declare the Word and will of God with the unction of the Holy Ghost (Ac. 2:18; Re. 19:10; Ac. 21:10-11). On the day of Pentecost, Peter spoke by the gift of prophecy when he “lifted up his voice” and preached the baptism with the Holy Ghost to the multitude: declaring their experience to be the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy (Ac. 2:12-18). The gift of prophecy continues to work in this same manner – the Spirit clarifying and declaring the mind of God in the church. Second, what is the gift of discernment? To discern means to distinguish between right and wrong, good and evil, truth and error. Discernment therefore requires righteous and spiritual judgment in the church (1 Co. 2:15; 5:12). The church has the responsibility of both “**proving** what is acceptable unto the Lord” (Ep. 5:10) and **reproving** “the unfruitful works of darkness” (v. 11). We must be able to prove the right and reprove the wrong. The gift of discerning of spirits is the divine ability to distinguish the nature of spirits, whether they are of God or not (1 Jn. 4:1). Of course, the one exercising this gift must himself know the truth and word of God, for by knowing the Spirit of Truth, one recognizes spirits of error. Reasonably then, the gift of discernment has as much to do with discerning truth as discerning error (1 Jn. 2:21; 4:5-6). Third, what is the relationship between the gifts of prophecy and discernment? The gift of prophecy is the divine enablement to speak the words of God by the special inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It functions to provide divine understanding and guidance for the ministry and mission of the church. God speaks by this gift of the Spirit through individual members to direct the course of the church. The potential danger regarding the gift of prophecy is when someone speaks in error and leads the church contrary to God’s will. The apostle Peter decisively warned against false teachers who follow after greed and the lust of the flesh, being “presumptuous” and “self-willed” (2 Pe. 2:1, 3, 10). Likewise, the apostle John implored the faithful to “try” (test, prove) the spirits “because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 Jn. 4:1). Hence, the gift of discerning of spirits is given to keep the church from such error. On this note, we should keep in mind that the Spirit of prophecy is also the Spirit of discernment. Therefore, the church should not be fearful of the gift of prophecy because the same Spirit has also given to the church the gift of discernment (1 Co. 12:4). These two spiritual gifts provide the necessary check and balance within the church. The church should be neither spiritually gullible nor suspicious. Instead, we should give the Spirit complete liberty to speak in the church (1 Th. 5:19-20), because we are enabled to discern fully the true Spirit of the Lord (v. 21).

Scripture Study

The gift of prophecy – He. 1:1-2; 2 Pe. 1:21; Ro. 12:6; 1 Co. 2:4-5; 1 Th. 1:5; Ac. 2:12-18; Re. 19:10; Ac. 21:10-11

The gift of discernment – 1 Co. 2:15; 5:12; Ep. 5:10-11; 1 Jn. 2:21; 4:1, 5-6

Balance in the church – 2 Pe. 2:1, 3, 10; 1 Jn. 4:1; 1 Co. 12:4; 1 Th. 5:19-21

Conclusion

Clearly, the gifts of prophecy and discernment should operate in the church for the edification of the whole body. When the word of the Lord goes forth with the inspiration and power of the Spirit by the gift of prophecy, and the saints exercise the gift of discernment in their spiritual experience, the church can then hear from God freely with the confidence and assurance of knowing the truth.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Spiritual Gifts"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Todd D. McDonald, Writer

Introduction

“Tongues and Interpretation of Tongues”

Tongues refer to spoken language. When thinking of languages, several typically come to one's mind. But literally thousands of languages are actually spoken in the world today. Some languages, like English, are widely international and intercultural, and extend worldwide geographically, while other languages like Telugu in India are more limited to an ethnicity or people group. Spoken languages are complex, yet basic and elemental to human interaction and communication (Ge. 11:1-9). Thus, the ministry of the church centers on the exercise of language among us. In today's lesson, we will see how the Spirit supernaturally uses language to speak through us and to us in order to edify the church.

Key Verse

“To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues” (1 Co. 12:10).

Lesson Summary

Tongues and interpretation of tongues have to do with divine communication: our communicating with God and his communicating with us (1 Co. 12:10). Most of the time, when we pray we talk to God in our own native tongue or in a language we already know and speak. Because we who speak and those who hear us already know the language, everyone understands and benefits from what is communicated in the church. But at times, the Holy Ghost prays through us supernaturally in “unknown” tongues which we do not know and cannot speak by our own ability; for we speak directly to God in the Spirit in mysteries and thus are individually edified by the Spirit in a special way (1 Co. 14:2, 4, 14). All Spirit-baptized believers speak with “unknown” tongues because tongues-speech is the evidence of the baptism with the Holy Ghost (Ac. 2:4; 10:44, 46; 19:6). There is also the gifts of divers (that is, diverse or different) tongues and interpretation of tongues, which the Spirit may exercise and demonstrate in the church as he wills (1 Co. 12:10). Through the gift of diverse tongues, the Holy Ghost can speak through Spirit-baptized believers in languages which are actually known and understood. Although the individual who speaks has no understanding of what is spoken, someone in the gathering of the saints may fully comprehend the language because it is his own native tongue (or a language he understands). For example, all of the saints who are gathered together may speak Spanish, except for a few who speaks Swahili and cannot understand the worship. The Holy Ghost can speak Swahili through one of the Spanish-speaking members in order to edify the whole body. We find an example of this spiritual gift on the day of Pentecost when every man heard the wonderful works of God in his own language (Ac. 2:4-11). When the Holy Ghost fell on the saints and they spoke with other tongues, the nearby crowd was ethnically diverse because the Jews from many nations had traveled to Jerusalem for the feast. The gift of diverse tongues operating through individual believers enabled the onlookers to understand what was being spoken by the Spirit (v. 11). Of course, this manifestation of the Spirit served as a powerful witness for Jesus Christ (Ac. 2:38-39; Jn. 15:26). Nevertheless, the majority of the times when we speak in tongues, as evidenced by Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 14, we speak in “unknown” tongues (that is, no one but God understands what we are saying). Therefore, we primarily speak to God in mysteries when we speak in tongues. Unless the Spirit is speaking by the gift of diverse tongues to someone who already understands the spoken language, the only other way we can understand the tongues is by the interpretation of the Spirit. God has given the gift of interpretation of tongues in order to provide understanding for the edification of the whole church (1 Co. 14:5-14). Paul instructed the church to pray for the operation of the gift of interpretation (v. 13). When thinking about tongues and interpretation of tongues, we should keep in mind that the Spirit is not limited by any language for God understands and speaks all languages. Thus, that which God speaks by the Spirit, he can also interpret by the Spirit. Yet when no interpretation is given by the Spirit, the individual believer should be quiet in the church (the *ekklesia*) and speak “to himself, and to God” (vv. 27-28).

Scripture Study

Tongues – 1 Co. 14:2, 4, 14; Ac. 2:4; 10:44, 46; 19:6

Diverse tongues – Ac. 2:4-11, 38-39; Jn. 15:26

Interpretation of tongues – 1 Co. 14:5-14, 27-28

Conclusion

The apostle Paul's emphasis on spiritual gifts is the edification of the body. Speaking in tongues edifies individual believers. The gift of diverse tongues edifies those who understand the spoken language. The interpretation of tongues edifies the whole body. How does Paul sum up his teaching on tongues and interpretation of tongues? “Forbid not to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Co. 14:39-40).

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Spiritual Gifts II"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Todd D. McDonald, Writer

“Signs Following Believers”

Introduction

Signs are an important means of communication. They convey thought, ideas, principles, direction, and so on. The significance of any sign is not the sign itself, but the idea it communicates and represents. For example, the purpose of a street sign is not its cosmetic appearance, but rather to identify a location. Therefore, an attractive sign bearing the wrong street information has no value and is confusing. In fact, it may even cause you to go in the wrong direction. In today's lesson, we will see the importance of “true” signs following believers in the mission and ministry of the church.

Key Verse

“And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen” (Mk. 16:20).

Lesson Summary

Miraculous signs and wonders accompanied Jesus' earthly ministry. The Spirit worked all kinds of miraculous signs through him, signs which confirmed that he was indeed the Christ, the Son of God, the Word made flesh (Jn. 1:1, 14, 32-34; 14:9-11; Mt. 11:1-6; Lu. 4:18-19). Jesus taught that his disciples would continue in this same ministry of miraculous (supernatural) signs through the power of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost (the Comforter, the Spirit of truth) would indwell and enable believers to do mighty works in Jesus' name, “that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (Jn. 14:12-17). After Christ's resurrection and before his ascension, he instructed the church regarding signs following believers, providing a representative list of miraculous wonders. Believers will cast out devils, speak with new tongues, take up serpents, be protected if they drink something deadly, and lay hands on the sick and heal them (Mk. 16:14-19). Indeed, the Holy Ghost manifested great wonders through the ministry of the New Testament church. For example, Peter did so many signs among the people that they brought their sick into the streets, hoping his shadow would fall on them when he passed (Ac. 5:12-16). Also, Paul sent handkerchiefs or aprons (“prayer cloths”) to the diseased and spiritually tormented, and they were healed and delivered (Ac. 19:11-12; see also 28:1-10). Such mighty works of the Holy Ghost characterized the New Testament church. Nevertheless, while Jesus taught about miraculous signs and wonders that follow believers, he also warned in the last days of deception and false prophets with their “great signs and wonders” (Mt. 24:4, 11, 24). Understanding that “signs” and “lying wonders” can be deceptive (2 Th. 2:8-11; Re. 13:11-16), how then should we think about miraculous signs in the mission and ministry of the church? A miraculous sign must communicate (corroborate, confirm) truth in order to be a true sign. Miraculous signs follow believers, but they actually serve to confirm the preached word, rather than the messenger himself (Mk. 16:20). Therefore, when we witness a manifestation of the Spirit, a supernatural work of God, our focus should not be on the messenger, per se, but rather on the Word of God, for signs serve to confirm the Word, Jesus Christ (Ac. 4:29-30; 6:7-8; 8:4-7, 12-13). Moreover, only when the preached word aligns with the truth of God's Word should we accept any accompanying signs as a true work of God. Christians who automatically accept outward manifestations as a confirmation of the messenger place themselves at a great risk for deception. By keeping our focus on the Word and the Spirit, not the signs or the messenger, we avoid this critical error.

Scripture Study

Jesus and miraculous signs – Jn. 1:1, 14, 32-34; 14:9-17; Mt. 11:1-6; Lu. 4:18-19; Mk. 16:14-19

The New Testament church and signs – Ac. 5:12-16; 19:11-12; 28:1-10

Lying wonders – Mt. 24:4, 11, 24; 2 Th. 2:8-11; Re. 13:11-16

Signs confirm the Word – Mk. 16:20; Ac. 4:29-30; 6:7-8; 8:4-7, 12-13

Conclusion

Although signs and wonders serve an important function in the witness of the church in these last days, we should not be overly preoccupied with miraculous signs, but rather focused on proclaiming the truth of God's Word in the power of the Spirit. As we declare the truth with God's anointing and power, the Spirit will confirm the Word with signs following, as needed.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Spiritual Gifts II"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Todd D. McDonald, Writer

Introduction

"A More Excellent Way"

In Zion Assembly Church of God, we want to be our very best – we want to excel in all that we endeavor to do for Christ. The gifts of the Spirit are vital when striving for excellence because these gifts enable us to minister beyond our own human capabilities. While all of us have certain God-given gifts and abilities, the gifts of the Spirit take us beyond ourselves and limitations, giving us supernatural ability to minister to others and build up the body of Christ. In today's lesson, we will consider the Spirit's most excellent gift.

Key Verse

"But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way" (1 Co. 12:31).

Lesson Summary

The spiritual gifts are operated by the Holy Ghost through individual members of the church in order to build up and strengthen the whole body of Christ. Although the nine spiritual gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 are extremely important to the spiritual health of the church and to the fulfillment of the mission of the church, the apostle Paul showed us "a more excellent way." He instructed the saints to "covet earnestly the best gifts," but emphasized the superior gift of God's Spirit – LOVE. Paul explained that the love that God demonstrated toward us in Jesus Christ is being poured out in our hearts by the indwelling Holy Spirit (Ro. 5:5, 8). From the moment we are gloriously saved (that is, justified and regenerated by the Holy Spirit) we experience God's great love in our hearts. When we are sanctified by the same Holy Spirit, we are immersed deeper into the love of God in Christ. When we are baptized with the same Holy Ghost, we are immersed even deeper into the love of God in Christ. Even as we are refilled with the Holy Ghost, again and again, we continue to plunge into the greater depths of God's love in Christ. In fact, the immeasurable love of God can be known only in Christ through the inner-working of the Holy Spirit (Ep. 3:16-19). Thus, every Spirit-filled believer possesses the divine enablement to go "deeper, deeper in the love of Jesus." Indeed, no other gift of God furthers the mission of the church and builds up the body of Christ like the love of God. Paul described divine love as the superior gift in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13. He emphasized love above speaking in tongues. The ability to speak in diverse tongues, even in angelic, heavenly languages, has no value whatsoever without divine love. Such tongues are nothing more than a loud, reverberating noise, like a gong (v. 1). The apostle also elevated love above other gifts like prophecy and faith. Although we might consider someone with deep prophetic revelations and supernatural manifestations of faith to be highly important, still such an individual is nothing without love (v. 2). Moreover, divine love is greater than any charitable and sacrificial work that we do. Unless God's love abides in the believer through the indwelling Spirit, even the most virtuous acts provide no eternal benefits (v. 3). Essentially, Paul placed divine love above the spiritual gifts, because these gifts are meaningless apart from God's love. Furthermore, the apostle clarified the qualities of divine love. The love poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Greek: *agape*) is distinctly different from mankind's love (Greek: *phileo*), because man's love can be motivated by fleshly, sinful passions and desires. Such worldly, fleshly love is inferior, and may even be hypocritical, impure, self-centered, and subject to change (Ro. 12:9-10). When Paul described the last days, he explained that people will be "lovers of their own selves" (*philautoi*), "covetous" (*philarguroi*, those who love money), "without natural affection" (loveless, perverted affections), "despisers of those that are good" (*aphilagathoi*, those who do not love the good), "lovers of pleasures [*philedonoi*] more than lovers of God [*philotheoi*]" (2 Ti. 3:1-4). On the contrary, the love of God is steadfast and true, devoted, pure, selfless, and unailing (1 Co. 13:4-8).

Scripture Study

A more excellent way – 1 Co. 12:31; Ro. 5:5, 8; Ep. 3:16-19

Love: The superior gift – 1 Co. 13:1-3

The qualities of divine love – Ro. 12:9-10; 2 Ti. 3:1-4; 1 Co. 13:4-8

Conclusion

A well-noted hymn of the church reads, "O love of God, how rich and pure! How measureless and strong! It shall forevermore endure, the saints' and angels' song." Love is a more excellent way – the superior gift of the Spirit excelling all others. Let every member of the church desire to excel in spiritual gifts, and above all, seek to excel in love.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

"Spiritual Gifts II"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Todd D. McDonald, Writer

“Prophecy”

Introduction

The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of Truth. His work in part is to teach the truth, testify of Christ, and guide into all truth (Jn. 14:17, 26; 15:26; 16:13). The many manifestations of the Spirit are given to comfort the believer and confirm the word of God, the truth. In today’s lesson, reflecting on the gifts of the Spirit, we will consider the priority of the spoken word of God.

Key Verse

“Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy” (1 Co. 14:1).

Lesson Summary

In 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, the apostle Paul taught about spiritual gifts, encouraging the saints to desire them (v. 31), because the gifts of the Spirit edify and build up the body of Christ. The gifts are necessary for the health of the church. Nevertheless, in chapter thirteen he went on to explain that spiritual gifts in the absence of divine love prove to be meaningless and profitless for the church (vv. 1-3). Paul then urged the church to make love its first priority, rather than spiritual gifts (1 Co. 13:13; 14:1). Nevertheless, he again exhorted the saints to desire spiritual gifts but then gave greater emphasis to prophesying (14:1). In other words, Paul was attempting to establish divine order in the church in regard to the operation of spiritual gifts. We must be yielded to the Holy Ghost in order to be used by God, but we, as instruments of the Spirit, are not out of control in the exercise of spiritual gifts. The Spirit desires order in the church; otherwise, Paul would not have taught order (1 Co. 14:39-40). Specifically, Paul contrasted prophesying with speaking in tongues (vv. 1-5). He considered both prophesying and speaking in unknown tongues to be divinely inspired communication. In both cases, God is speaking through individual members of the body. However, Paul gave the greater importance to the one who prophesies, simply because his words are spoken with understanding, whereas speaking in tongues remains a mystery without an interpretation (vv. 2, 5). Speaking in tongues edifies the one who speaks, but prophesying edifies all who hear. Speaking in tongues spiritually builds up the individual believer, but prophesying builds up the whole church (vv. 3-4). Clearly, Paul wanted the saints to have the freedom to speak in tongues when they gathered together, but his greater desire was that they prophesy in the church (vv. 5, 18-19), because the spiritual goal in our gathering together as one body is the edification of the whole church. Personal spirituality and communion with God are expressed in deep and mysterious ways, even humanly inexpressible ways, and thus the need for speaking in tongues. Paul declared, “I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all” (v. 18). But our corporate spirituality in the church must attain a practical, applicable, and meaningful expression in order to benefit the whole body. In other words, individuals may speak in tongues, weep and groan in the Spirit, and shout and rejoice with joy unspeakable, and while this is spiritually edifying for the individuals who are so exercised of the Spirit, yet if such expressions do not produce something concrete, tangible, and beneficial for the whole church, many believers will not receive what they need in order to thrive spiritually. Paul explained it thus, that not only people, but inanimate things have sound. For example, instruments have distinct sounds by which they are identified. If their sounds have no distinction, then they cannot be identified for particular purposes, as when an alarm is sounded. In the same way, when we speak in the church, we must speak in distinct ways that communicate something concrete and understandable. Otherwise, people depart from the house of God spiritually unfulfilled (vv. 6-11). Therefore, when addressing spirituality in the church, Paul’s focus was not on tongues, but rather on the spoken word of God. When the Word is declared among the saints with the inspiration and anointing of the Spirit (that is, when we prophesy), the church is greatly strengthened in the will and mind of Christ. Prophesying edifies, exhorts, and comforts the church when it is done decently and orderly (vv. 3, 29-33).

Scripture Study

Divine order in the church – 1 Co. 12:31; 13:13; 14:1, 39-40

Prophesying rather than tongues – 1 Co. 14:1-5, 18-19

The spoken word of God – 1 Co. 14:3, 6-11, 29-33

Conclusion

Believers prophesy in various ways, such as in preaching, teaching, witnessing, testimonials, praise, and prayer. Moreover, many powerful messages from the Lord have been given from the pew (members), as well as the pulpit (ministers). When members of the body are yielded to the Holy Ghost, he will inspire them to declare the word of God in many wonderful ways in order to establish the church in the truth.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

“Essentials”

Adult Bible Study Curriculum

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Todd D. McDonald, Writer

Spiritual Gifts II

Lesson Outlines

September 1

Topic: *Prophecy and Discernment*

Texts: He. 1:1-2; 2 Pe. 1:21; Ro. 12:6; 1 Co. 2:4-5; 1 Th. 1:5; Ac. 2:12-18; Re. 19:10; Ac. 21:10-11; 1 Co. 2:15; 5:12; Ep. 5:10-11; 1 Jn. 2:21; 4:1, 5-6; 2 Pe. 2:1, 3, 10; 1 Jn. 4:1; 1 Co. 12:4; 1 Th. 5:19-21

Key Verse: Ro. 12:6

Main Point: Through the gifts of prophecy and discernment, the church can hear from God freely with confidence and assurance in knowing the truth.

September 8

Topic: *Tongues and Interpretation of Tongues*

Texts: 1 Co. 14:2, 4, 14; Ac. 2:4; 10:44, 46; 19:6; Ac. 2:4-11, 38-39; Jn. 15:26; 1 Co. 14:5-14, 27-28, 39-40

Key Verse: 1 Co. 12:10

Main Point: Tongues and interpretation of tongues are given by the Spirit to enhance divine communication in the church.

September 15

Topic: *Signs Following Believers*

Texts: Jn. 1:1, 14, 32-34; 14:9-17; Mt. 11:1-6; Lu. 4:18-19; Mk. 16:14-19; Ac. 5:12-16; 19:11-12; 28:1-10; Mt. 24:4, 11, 24; 2 Th. 2:8-11; Re. 13:11-16; Mk. 16:20; Ac. 4:29-30; 6:7-8; 8:4-7, 12-13

Key Verse: Mk. 16:20

Main Point: Miraculous signs of the Spirit serve to confirm the word of God.

September 22

Topic: *A More Excellent Way*

Texts: 1 Co. 12:31; Ro. 5:5, 8; Ep. 3:16-19; 1 Co. 13:1-3; Ro. 12:9-10; 2 Ti. 3:1-4; 1 Co. 13:4-8

Key Verse: 1 Co. 12:31

Main Point: The Holy Spirit's most excellent gift is love.

September 29

Topic: *Prophecy*

Texts: 1 Co. 12:31; 13:13; 14:1, 39-40; 1 Co. 14:1-5, 6-11, 18-19, 29-33

Key Verse: 1 Co. 14:1

Main Point: The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of truth. Spiritual gifts should therefore support the church in prophesying the truth.

In this month of Faith-N-Focus, we continue our study on spiritual gifts. God has placed the gifts of the Spirit in the church to edify the body and enable the ministry and mission of the church. God desires to speak to and through the members of the church. The Holy Spirit anoints and inspires individual members to declare the word of God in order to build up the whole body with words that comfort, direct, and strengthen the people. We can readily hear and receive the word of God with confidence when the gift of discernment is operating in the church, enabling us to know the truth through the Spirit. Moreover, the Holy Ghost speaks by tongues and interpretation of tongues, enhancing divine communication in the church.

The Spirit dynamically works through individual believers to build up the body and to confirm the word of God. Jesus explained that supernatural signs will follow believers, and those signs and wonders will serve to establish and strengthen the proclamation of the truth. However, to keep the church spiritually balanced, and to prevent the church from being overly preoccupied with spiritual demonstrations – signs and wonders – Paul emphasized that the greatest gift of the Spirit within the church is LOVE. The operation of all of the spiritual gifts should be motivated by divine love.

Finally, in cultivating a healthy, balanced spirituality within the church, Paul called attention to proper order in regard to the spiritual gifts. No gift, particularly tongues, should take priority over the word of God, or stand on its own over against the word of God. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of truth. All of the spiritual gifts administered by the Spirit should therefore support the church in its ministry of prophesying the truth.



To receive your free monthly subscription to Faith-N-Focus curriculum, please send your request to sundayschoolservices@zionassemblychurchofgod.com. Along with the “Essentials” monthly summary, you will receive the weekly Student Guides. For more information about Zion Assembly Church of God, please visit our website at www.zionassemblychurchofgod.com.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies "Essentials"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Todd D. McDonald

Healings, Part One

Lesson Outlines

October 6

Topic: *Job's Recovery*

Texts: Job. 1:1-22; 2:1-13; 3:1-3; 42:1-17; Ro. 11:33-36; Ja. 1:3; 5:11; 1 Co. 10:13; Ex. 15:26; Ps. 103:3

Key Verse: Job 1:22

Main Point: If we expect to recover and to overcome our afflictions, then we must persevere in the faith like Job.

October 13

Topic: *Hannah's Cry*

Texts: Je. 29:11; 1 Sa. 1:1-28; 2:18; 3:19-21; 7:3-4, 8-17; Ja. 5:10; Ro. 8:28; Ps. 34:15

Key Verse: 1 Sa. 1:10

Main Point: God uses adversity to accomplish his will in our lives. We should face adversity with humility and faith.

October 20

Topic: *Naaman the Leper*

Texts: 2 Ki. 5:1-14; Le. 13:1-46; 14:1-20; Ja. 4:10; 1 Pe. 5:6-7

Key Verse: 2 Ki. 5:14

Main Point: To receive healing from the Lord, we should be submissive and obedient to God's word.

October 27

Topic: *Hezekiah's Healing*

Texts: 1 Co. 15:22; Ro. 5:12; Ec. 3:1-2; 1 Co. 12:18; Ph. 1:23-24; 2 Ti. 4:5-7; 2 Ki. 16:1-4; 18:1-8; 20:1-7; He. 4:15-16

Key Verse: 2 Ki. 20:3

Main Point: In times of sickness and suffering, especially in the face of death, we should cry out to God.

In this month of Faith-N-Focus, we begin the study entitled *Healings*. Quoting from the *Abstract of Faith*, "Divine healing is provided for all in the atonement. Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross provides healing for the whole man, including his body. Divine healing is effected by faith without the aid of medicine or surgical skills. In cases where one is healed through the assistance of physicians, medicine, herbs, etc., God is still to be praised: for it is God who heals in any case. 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases' (Ps. 103:2-3; Is. 53:4-5; Mt. 8:17; 1 Pe. 2:24; Ja. 5:14-16)."

Without question, God is indeed our healer, and he has provided our healing through his Son, Jesus Christ. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Is. 53:4-5). Although the infirmities of mankind are diverse and many, when God gave his Son for us, he made the way of salvation and deliverance for all of our needs.

During this quarter, we will consider various healing scenarios throughout the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments. By studying *Healings*, we aim to build up the faith of the saints and encourage all people to trust in Jesus Christ, not only as healer, but even more as Savior. "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house" (Mk. 2:10-11).



To receive your free monthly email subscription to Faith-N-Focus curriculum, please send your request to sundayschoolservices@zionassemblychurchofgod.com. In addition to the Adult Bible Studies, you will also receive Faith-N-Focus for Teens and for Young Disciples. For more information about Zion Assembly Church of God, please visit our website at www.zionassemblychurchofgod.com.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"Healings, Part One"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Todd D. McDonald

Introduction

“Job’s Recovery”

Perhaps no other narrative in the Bible inspires faith like the life of Job. To summarize his life’s story, he had it all, he lost it all, but in the end, he gained everything. His experience from start to finish is a remarkable story of unwavering faith in God, especially in the face of suffering. The incredible trials of his faith and his ultimate victory inspire us with hope when facing the greatest of challenges. In today’s lesson, *Job’s Recovery*, we will consider the necessity of keeping the faith when everything around us literally falls apart.

Key Verse

“In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly” (Job 1:22).

Lesson Summary

The Bible explains that Job was “a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil” (Job 1:1, 8). He understood that God is holy, and therefore he followed after holiness and desired to please the Lord. In addition to his personal piety, his dedication and faithfulness as a man of God are evident by his continual offerings on behalf of his sons and daughters (1:4-5). Thus, Job functioned as a priest interceding with God for his whole family. Moreover, he was extremely prosperous, making him “the greatest of all the men of the east” (v. 3). In every sense of the word, Job was successful: spiritually, personally, and financially. Indeed, he was a godly man of great influence and prominence among the people in the land of Uz. Clearly then, not because of anything he was doing wrong but rather because he was doing everything right, Satan desired to destroy this blessed man of God (vv. 9-12). After Satan attacked him, Job literally lost everything he possessed, including his sons and daughters (vv. 13-19). He was broken by this experience and completely humbled before the Lord, yet through it all, he maintained his integrity and faith in God (vv. 20-22; 2:3). Could his situation have become any worse? Up to that point, all that he held dear was taken away, but Job himself was unscathed (1:12). The Accuser then challenged the Lord, saying, “Put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face” (2:5). The Lord gave Job into the hand of Satan – the only thing Satan could not touch was his life (v. 6). When the Devil struck Job with sores all over his body, head to toe, his wife did not comfort him and support his faith. Instead, watching him suffer, she spoke foolishly and tempted him to “curse God, and die” (vv. 9-10). Likewise, when his three friends arrived – Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite – they provided little comfort and no lasting support. After mourning with Job for seven days (vv. 11-13), these “friends” spoke to Job unjustly regarding God’s hand in his circumstances (42:7). Certainly, Job’s condition was pitiful. He was a man of God who lost all that he possessed: his wealth, his children, and his health. He was emotionally broken (3:1-3) with no man to comfort him. Essentially, Job was left with nothing but his faith in God. Yet in the end, all that Job needed was his faith in God. When all was said and done, Job came to realize the greatness of a holy God, and he understood that God’s ways are so much greater than man’s limited knowledge and temporary circumstances (42:3; Ro. 11:33-36). Job finally said, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (42:5-6). Through it all, Job humbled himself, and in the end, God delivered him (vv. 7-10). Job fully recovered, not because he was wealthy, or did good works, or was influential among the people, but simply because God is faithful and Job persevered in his faith (1 Co. 10:13; Ja. 1:3). He believed and trusted the Lord to the finish, no matter what (Ja. 5:11).

Scripture Study

Job, a successful man – Job. 1:1-5, 8

The trail of Job’s faith – Job 1:9-22; 2:3-6

When no one understands – Job 2:9-13; 3:1-3; 42:7

Job’s humility and healing – Job 42:3; Ro. 11:33-36; Job 42:5-10; Ja. 1:3; 5:11; 1 Co. 10:13

Conclusion

True, real faith perseveres and endures to the finish (2 Ti. 4:7). When everything around him said, “Give up,” Job held on and trusted the Lord. Was it easy? Of course not! But through all of his questions, frustrations, and insecurities, he believed God, and by faith he fully recovered. Like Job, we must hold on to our faith in God, even when our circumstances appear hopeless, because our hope is never in our physical circumstances, but our hope is in the Lord our healer (Ex. 15:26; Ps. 103:3).

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"Healings, Part One"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Todd D. McDonald

"Hannah's Cry"

Introduction

Hannah's Cry is a lesson that demonstrates how adverse conditions can actually work for our good when we have the faith to believe and trust in God. Trials can either make us bitter or make us better. The outcome depends on our spirit (attitude) and perspective. We should always believe that God is working in our lives, even in the hardest situations, in order to bring us to "an expected end" (Je. 29:11).

Key Verse

"And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore" (1 Sa. 1:10).

Lesson Summary

Today's study is the backdrop and setting of one of Israel's greatest leaders, Samuel, who was a priest, prophet, and judge in Israel (1 Sa. 2:18; 3:19-21; 7:9, 15-17). The story of Samuel begins with a woman named Hannah. She was loved and favored by her husband, Elkanah; but she was barren and had no children because the Lord had closed her womb (1 Sa. 1:1-5). Did this mean that God was against her? In the eyes of some, Hannah was despised (vv. 6-7), but in the eyes of the Lord, she was highly favored. Although her husband dearly loved her and gave her preferential treatment in his household, his love could not change her adversity or satisfy her deep longing and need for a son (vv. 5-8). Her affliction produced emptiness and sorrow in her heart; and her grief brought her to a place of brokenness and humility before the Lord. "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up" (Ja. 5:10). The Lord closed her womb, but he did so with purpose. He allowed her sorrow to bring her to a place of desperation in order to use Hannah. God needed a yielded vessel to accomplish his divine will. Because of her affliction, Hannah "was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore" (1 Sa. 1:10). She reached the point that she was selfless in her petition. Her desire for a son was no longer merely to satisfy her need, but she became willing to surrender her child to the service of the Lord (v. 11). "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Ro. 8:28). She came to the place where she had a sorrowful spirit and poured out her soul in prayer, expressing her abundant grief to the Lord (vv. 15-16). Then God heard her cry and gave her a son, whom she named Samuel (vv. 17, 19-20). The psalmist David exclaimed, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry" (Ps. 34:15). What did the Lord want from Hannah? – Complete surrender to his will and purpose. God had something much greater in mind than giving a son to a sorrowful woman – this child would be forever "lent to the Lord." God fully intended to raise up a courageous leader in the house of Israel – a leader completely dedicated to serving the Lord and performing the word of the Lord (vv. 24-28). But it took barrenness (v. 5), adversity (v. 6), sorrow, weeping (vv. 7, 8, 10), and affliction (v. 11) to bring forth God's will through Hannah. The answer to her cry meant so much more than becoming a mother. Her selfless supplication and healing ultimately brought about deliverance for God's people, for Samuel eventually led Israel to victory over the Philistines (1 Sa. 7:3-4, 8-15).

Scripture Study

Hannah's barren condition – 1 Sa. 1:1-8

Her affliction and petition – Ja. 5:10; 1 Sa. 1:10-11, 15-16; Ro. 8:28

The answer to her prayer – 1 Sa. 1:17, 19-20, 24-28; 7:3-4, 8-15

Conclusion

The story of Hannah inspires every believer to face adversity with courage and faith, knowing that God is our healer. Hannah could have become a miserable, bitter woman without faith and hope. But instead, she cried out to God with all of her heart. Amazingly, the prayer of one woman changed the course of Israel. God took her need and did something remarkable through Hannah. Out of her deep despair, she prayed, and God healed her body. Through her healing, she then became the mother of one of the most influential spiritual leaders in the history of the church.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"Healings, Part One"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Todd D. McDonald

Introduction

“Naaman the Leper”

Healing depends on both faith and obedience. Why? If we truly desire to be healed, then we must receive healing on God’s terms, not ours. That is, we must not only exercise faith in God, but also submit to his will. Therefore, resistance to the will of God can actually stand in the way of our being healed. To receive healing from the Lord, we should be submissive and obedient to God’s word.

Key Verse

“Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean” (2 Ki. 5:14).

Lesson Summary

Naaman was the general of Syria’s great army. He was a respected, honorable, and valiant leader. Because of his military accomplishments he was highly favored by the king of Syria. Although he was notably successful, he nevertheless had a plague of leprosy, an incurable skin disease (2 Ki. 5:1). In Israel, since leprosy was not treatable, the disease was controlled and contained by isolation until an individual was cleansed (or healed) from the disease. The priests of God functioned somewhat like doctors, determining what was a true leprosy according to the law of God, and pronouncing when an individual was unclean or clean (Le. 13:1-46). Naaman’s wife had a servant, a young maid who was a captive from Israel (2 Ki. 5:2). She spoke to Naaman’s wife about the prophet Elisha, saying, “Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! For he would recover him of his leprosy” (v. 3). When the king of Syria heard this good news, he sent Naaman with a letter unto the king of Israel, requiring that he should be healed. The prophet Elisha called for Naaman to come to him, but when Naaman arrived at his house, the prophet did not come out to greet him (Le. 13:45-46). Instead, he sent word that he should go to the Jordan river, wash in the river seven times, and be healed. [Note: Compare Elisha’s instructions with the requirements of the law for cleansing in Leviticus 14:1-20.] Being a high-ranking and important official in Syria, Naaman was angry because Elisha did not come out to him in person and pray an elaborate prayer over him. He was expecting the prophet to do something demonstrative and miraculous. But instead, the prophet sent a messenger specifying God’s requirements for Naaman: 1) Go and wash yourself; 2) You must wash in the Jordan; and 3) You must wash seven times. Naaman considered these requirements to be unreasonable, and, at first, he was unwilling to do them. The more he talked about it, the more irritated he became – “Why should I wash in the Jordan; why not wash in the rivers of Damascus?” He left Elisha’s house outraged. God actually asked very little of Naaman, yet he allowed pride to stand in the way of his obedience and his healing. His servants exercised greater wisdom in convincing him to lay aside his foolish pride and obey the words of the prophet. Naaman then went to the Jordan, washed seven times, and was cleansed from his leprosy (vv. 4-14). Interestingly, scholars typically trace the origin of the word “Jordan” to the Hebrew verb, “yarad,” meaning “to descend” (R. Laird Harris, Ed., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. 1, Moody Press, 1980, p. 402.) Naaman had to descend. His spirit had to come down and be humbled. He had to become willing and submissive to God in order to be healed. He dipped seven times in the Jordan River. He came up the first time, but nothing happened. Then the second, third, and fourth, but still nothing changed. Each time he went down and came back up, did Naaman consider what he was doing? He was no longer the man in charge, but he yielded his will to the will of God. He followed the specific instructions of God’s prophet, washed in the inferior waters of Jordan, and humbled his prideful spirit (Ja. 4:10; 1 Pe. 5:6-7). He obeyed, and when Naaman came up the seventh time, he was completely healed.

Scripture Study

Naaman’s disease – 2 Ki. 5:1; Le. 13:1-46

The cure – 2 Ki. 5:2-10; Le. 14:1-20

Humility and obedience – 2 Ki. 5:11-14; Ja. 4:10; 1 Pe. 5:6-7

Conclusion

Desiring to be healed and the willingness to be healed are not precisely the same. Since healing depends on God’s terms, we must be willing to submit ourselves to the will of God in order to receive our healing from him. An individual can actually desire healing but not desire the will of God in his life. Such resistance stands in the way of healing. We should have the faith to submit ourselves to Jesus Christ and obey the word of God in order to be healed.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"Healings, Part One"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Todd D. McDonald

“Hezekiah’s Healing”

Introduction

Truly, we do not always understand what God is doing in our lives and exactly why he is doing it; but we can be fully assured that God completely understands us even when we do not understand ourselves. He knows our sorrow and interprets the meaning of our tears. In today’s lesson, we will see the results of crying out to God in faith.

Key Verse

“I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore” (2 Ki. 20:3).

Lesson Summary

“In Adam all die” (1 Co. 15:22) – every human being is mortal and eventually experiences death (Ro. 5:12). But no child of God should want to depart this life before his appointed time (Ec. 3:1-2). Although we have an eternal home awaiting us, God has a temporal purpose and service for each individual (1 Co. 12:18). We should therefore desire to live out our lives to the fullest extent and accomplish all that we can do for the Lord, while we have the strength and the opportunity to serve (Ph. 1:23-24). Certainly, we should not desire to finish our course in this world, until God is completely finished with us (2 Ti. 4:5-7). As children of God, we should seek to live out God’s purpose in our lives. Hezekiah reigned as king over Judah for twenty-nine years. His father, Ahaz, had been a corrupt leader, following the wickedness of the kings of Israel, and even making a sacrifice of his son (2 Ki. 16:1-4). However, Hezekiah was a spiritual reformer, following righteousness and turning the nation back to the Lord. He found favor with God. In fact, the Bible acclaims him as the greatest of the kings of Judah because he trusted the Lord and kept God’s commandments (2 Ki. 18:1-8). Nevertheless, Hezekiah became severely sick and faced imminent death. The Scriptures described his illness in terms of a boil in his body (20:7). Perhaps, he had some type of cancer. The prophet Isaiah told him to get his house in order because he was going to die (20:1). Reasonably, the king could have accepted his “hopeless” condition and prepared himself for death, for the prophet came to him, saying, “Thus saith the Lord” (v. 1). After all, how does one contend with God? Yet Hezekiah appealed to the mercy of the Lord; “then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the Lord” (v. 2). He believed the word of the Lord and understood the gravity of the moment, but he also believed that God was able to change his dire circumstances. He did not argue with God or contest the will of God. Instead, Hezekiah wept and prayed, reminding the Lord that he had served faithfully over Judah (v. 3). Hezekiah felt desperate, for everything seemed to be quickly coming to an end. He immediately cried out to the Lord, and the Lord heard his despairing cry (vv. 4-5). Because Hezekiah believed in God’s power to heal and called on the name of the Lord in tears, his circumstances miraculously changed (v. 6). Had he accepted his original prognosis, his life would have been cut short. But he came boldly to God, obtained mercy, and found grace for his need (He. 4:16). Truly, our high priest can “be touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (He. 4:15). Because of his faithfulness, Hezekiah stood out as the greatest of the kings. Through faith and humility, he recovered and continued to reign over Judah for another fifteen years.

Scripture Study

Living God’s purpose – 1 Co. 15:22; Ro. 5:12; Ec. 3:1-2; 1 Co. 12:18; Ph. 1:23-24; 2 Ti. 4:5-7

Hezekiah’s life – 2 Ki. 16:1-4; 18:1-8

Facing death with faith – 2 Ki. 20:1-7; He. 4:15-16

Conclusion

The Lord is ever mindful of our needs (Mt. 6:8). He hears our prayers and sees our tears (2 Ki. 20:5). Certainly, none of us are sovereign. We do not always know the will of God in our lives in every situation. Therefore, we should appeal to the mercy of the Lord, even when faced with inevitable death. When we cry out to God in faith and humility, we can be sure that he will answer according to his divine will and purpose for our lives.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies "Essentials"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Todd D. McDonald

“Healings, Part Two”

Lesson Outlines

November 3

Topic: Serpent of Brass

Texts: Nu. 20:23-26; 33:37-40; He. 3:7-19; De. 8:15-16; Nu. 21:1-9; He. 12:3; Ex. 13:1-5; He. 12:14-15; 1 Co. 3:16; Ep. 2:21-22; 1 Co. 10:9-11; Ro. 6:23; Ga. 6:7; Jn. 3:14-16

Key Verse: Jn. 3:14

Main Point: Inner, spiritual healing through faith in Jesus Christ affects the well-being of the whole person.

November 10

Topic: The Centurion's Servant

Texts: Mk. 1:21-22; Lu. 4:16, 31-37, 44; Mt. 4:12-16, 23-25; 9:1; Mk. 2:1; Mt. 8:5-13; Lu. 7:1-10

Key Verse: Mt. 8:10

Main Point: We are healed through faith in the authority of the Word.

November 17

Topic: The Faith of Friends

Texts: Pr. 17:17; Ro. 12:15; Mk. 2:1-12; Lu. 5:18-26; Ga. 6:1-2; Ex. 15:26; Mt. 5:41

Key Verse: Mk. 2:5

Main Point: Lost people are depending on our faith and faithfulness for their salvation and healing.

November 24

Topic: Gratitude

Texts: Lu. 17:5-19; Is. 53:5; He. 2:17-18; 4:15-16; Ps. 103:1-5

Key Verse: Lu. 17:15

Main Point: When we receive healing from the Lord, faith in Jesus Christ should produce gratitude in our hearts.

In this month of *Faith-N-Focus*, we continue our study of *Healings*. When Moses placed the serpent of brass on a pole and lifted it up for the healing and salvation of the people, this was a type and symbol of Jesus Christ. Jesus is both our Savior and healer. He not only suffered to save the sinner, but he was also lifted up on the cross for the healing of the whole man. Through Jesus Christ, we live and receive the promise of an abundant life (Jn. 10:10). We should therefore place our faith in the power and authority of Jesus Christ, believing that he is able to heal all of our sicknesses and diseases.

Moreover, when we see the suffering of others, we have the responsibility to bring them to Jesus Christ. The saints must have enough faith to believe for the salvation and healing of unsaved family and friends. The world is looking for answers to their sicknesses and suffering. They are looking to medicine, therapy, philosophy, and nature. But the true answer for the healing of mankind is the Lord, Jesus Christ (Ex. 15:26). Certainly, God often uses resources like physicians and medicines as an aid in healing, but ultimately Christ is our healer. Therefore, the emphasis in these lessons is encouraging believers to look first directly to the Lord for healing, as well as for salvation. The sinner and unbelieving are counting on our steadfast faith to make the difference in their lives. We should therefore be willing to go the extra mile in order to bring them to Christ (Mt. 5:41).

“Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's” (Ps. 103:1-5).



To receive your free monthly email subscription to Faith-N-Focus curriculum, please send your request to sundayschoolservices@zionassemblychurchofgod.com. In addition to the Adult Bible Studies, you will also receive Faith-N-Focus for Teens and for Young Disciples. For more information about Zion Assembly Church of God, please visit our website at www.zionassemblychurchofgod.com.

Faith-N-Focus : *E-quip Your Faith*

Adult Bible Studies

"Healings, Part Two"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Todd D. McDonald

“Serpent of Brass”

Introduction

Some forty years after the children of Israel left Egypt, near the completion of their wilderness wanderings, King Arad the Canaanite attacked Israel and took prisoners (Nu. 20:23-26; 21:1; 33:37-40). When this happened, Israel vowed to utterly destroy the cities of the Canaanites if the Lord would only give them the victory. God gave the Canaanites into their hands; and they completely destroyed their cities (Nu. 21:2-3). Although their enemies fought against them, whenever Israel called upon the name of the Lord, God was their defense, and he fought mightily against their adversaries. Nevertheless, as the writer to the Hebrews explained, Israel was hard-hearted and continually grieved the Lord, sinning against him and breaking his commandments (He. 3:7-19). In today’s lesson, we will see how Israel’s sinning brought sickness and suffering upon them.

Key Verse

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up” (Jn. 3:14).

Lesson Summary

Throughout Israel’s wilderness wanderings, God used adversity (hard circumstances) to prove his people’s faithfulness (De. 8:15-16). Would they trust the Lord and hold fast to his commandments? Unfortunately, they often failed to trust and obey the Lord. God gave Israel victory over the Canaanites, but soon they forgot. The children of Israel became discouraged and complained against the Lord God, saying, “Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?” (Nu. 21:5). To their own demise, the children of Israel murmured against God. On this particular occasion, they were weary because of the difficult journey. They had no food and water; and they were tired of eating manna (see also Nu. 11:6). But rather than crying out to the Lord for strength and provision, they grumbled against God and found fault with their leadership (vv. 4-5). The Lord never claimed that Moses was flawless, but he was perfect for the job of leading Israel. Like Jesus, Moses often endured the opposition of sinners against him (He. 12:3)? The Lord never promised that the way would be easy, but he did promise to bring them into the land flowing with milk and honey (Ex. 13:1-5). Because of their disobedient spirit, God judged his people with “fiery serpents.” Many people died from these venomous snakebites (Nu. 21:6). Murmuring, grumbling, and complaining are more than mere negative words – these practices are actually destructive to the peace and holiness of God’s church, arising from a bitter, infected spirit within a person, and thus defiling the temple of God (He. 12:14-15; 1 Co. 3:16; Ep. 2:21-22). For this reason, God judged his people with “fiery serpents.” Their error and consequential judgment stand as a warning to the church. The apostle Paul wrote, “Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these happened unto them for ensamples” (1 Co. 10:9-11; Ro. 6:23). Their rebellious spirit literally brought this judgment upon them. Likewise, today people also suffer in various ways (physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually) because they have a bitter, antagonistic spirit. Bitterness produces a resentful, fault-finding attitude, causing people to blame others and even God for their circumstances. In this way, sin defiles many people, and as a result, they suffer the consequences (He. 12:15; Ga. 6:7). However, when the people humbled themselves, repented, and looked to the Lord for mercy, they were saved. God told Moses to make a serpent of brass and lift it up on a pole for all to see. When the people were bitten, if they looked to the serpent of brass, they were healed and lived (Nu. 21:7-9).

Scripture Study

The sin of grumbling – De. 8:15-16; Nu. 21:4-5; He. 12:3; Ex. 13:1-5

The results of sinning – Nu. 21:6; He. 12:14-15; 1 Co. 3:16; Ep. 2:21-22; 1 Co. 10:9-11; Ro. 6:23; Ga. 6:7

Looking to Jesus – Nu. 21:7-9; Jn. 3:14-16

Conclusion

The remedy for a bitter spirit is not pharmaceuticals (medicines/drugs). The answer is repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Like the serpent of brass, Jesus was lifted up on the cross for our salvation and healing (Jn. 3:14-16). Through faith in him, we experience forgiveness and peace with God (Ro. 5:1). When the inner, spiritual man is healed through faith in Christ, the whole man experiences the resulting effects of such healing – physically, mentally, and emotionally (see Ja. 5:14-16).

Faith-N-Focus : *E-quip Your Faith*

Adult Bible Studies

"Healings, Part Two"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Todd D. McDonald

Introduction

“The Centurion’s Servant”

The apostle John wrote, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” (Jn. 1:1-3). Being the creator and sustainer of all things (He. 1:2-3), the Son of God certainly has the power to heal mankind. Jesus has all power and authority (Mt. 28:18). We can therefore place our trust and confidence in his ability to meet our needs. In today’s lesson, we will consider a remarkable example of faith in the authority of the Word.

Key Verse

“When Jesus heard it, he marveled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel” (Mt. 8:10).

Lesson Summary

Jesus entered the city of Capernaum, preaching the gospel and teaching the multitudes with authority (Mk. 1:21-22; Lu. 4:31-32). Although Jesus grew up in Nazareth (Lu. 4:16), Capernaum, located on the northern coast of the Sea of Galilee, served as his home and ministry base (Mt. 4:12-16; Mt. 9:1; Mk 2:1). From there, Jesus traveled and ministered throughout the region of Galilee (Mt. 4:23-25). In Capernaum, a Roman centurion sent word to Jesus, pleading for his immediate help. Centurions were military officers placed over one hundred soldiers. Therefore, a centurion was an officer having authority, yet serving under authority. He understood what it meant to give orders, and to receive orders and carry them out (Mt. 8:5, 9; Lu. 7:8). In this regard, the centurion recognized and respected the spiritual authority of Christ. He petitioned Jesus, not for himself, but rather for the healing of his servant who severely suffered with palsy (paralysis). Of course, we have no way of knowing his specific, medical condition – only that his servant was “grievously tormented” and at the point of death (Mt. 8:6; Lu. 7:2). At first, the centurion sent word by the Jewish elders, who then urged Jesus to come and heal this servant (Lu. 7:3). How did this Roman come in contact with the ministry of Jesus? Who told him about Christ? Had he seen Jesus and heard him personally? Had he witnessed his miracles? The Jews honored the centurion because he had shown them special favor in building them a synagogue (Lu. 7:4-5). According to Luke, Jesus’ ministry was well-known in Capernaum and Galilee; he taught and preached in the synagogues and demonstrated the authority of his word by casting out demons (Lu. 4:31-37, 44). It would seem that Jesus taught in the very synagogue which the centurion had built for the Jews. Regardless, he knew that Jesus had the authority to change the situation. Feeling the urgency of his plea and being moved with compassion, without hesitation, Jesus said, “I will come and heal him” (Mt. 8:7; Lu. 7:3-5). However, the centurion displayed a unique, unparalleled quality of humility and faith (Mt. 8:10; Lu. 7:9). Just before Jesus arrived at his house, the centurion sent word again, saying, “Lord, trouble not thyself” (Lu. 7:6). He felt unworthy for Jesus to enter his home; he even felt unworthy to come to the Lord in person (vv. 6-7; compare with v. 4). Moreover, he so respected Jesus’ authority that he believed his servant would be healed if Jesus would simply “speak the word” (Mt. 8:8; Lu. 7:7). The centurion firmly believed in the authority and life-giving power of Jesus’ word. The Lord then said, “Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee” (Mt. 8:13; Lu. 7:10).

Scripture Study

The setting of the story in Capernaum – Mk. 1:21-22; Lu. 4:16, 31-37, 44; Mt. 4:12-16, 23-25; 9:1; Mk. 2:1

Matthew’s account – Mt. 8:5-13

Luke’s account – Lu. 7:1-10

Conclusion

When Luke wrote about this healing, he included more specific details of the actual event. However, Matthew wrote from the simple perspective of the centurion (a Roman gentile) and included more of the words of Christ. In Matthew, a gospel heavily directed toward Jewish readers, Jesus alluded to the inclusion of the gentiles (non-Jews) in the kingdom of God (Mt. 8:10-12). Indeed, the Lord is not concerned about nationality, ethnicity, or the color of one’s skin. Rather, he is looking for people of all nations who have genuine faith in his Word. By faith in the authority of the Word, the Roman centurion received his petition from the Lord, and his servant was made whole. We too may be healed through faith in the authority of the Word and his great compassion.

Faith-N-Focus : *E-quip Your Faith*

Adult Bible Studies

"Healings, Part Two"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Todd D. McDonald

Introduction

“The Faith of Friends”

Who is a true friend? The Bible says, “A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity” (Pr. 17:17). A true friend will “rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep” (Ro. 12:15). A friend is someone who stands by your side when all others forsake you. He does not leave you when adversity comes. He empathizes with your suffering and offers support when you are weak and helpless. In today’s lesson, we will see how the faith of friends moved them to action and helped to transform a man’s life, physically and spiritually.

Key Verse

“When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee” (Mk. 2:5).

Lesson Summary

When Jesus returned to Capernaum after ministering throughout the region of Galilee, the news spread that he was back in town, and soon a multitude gathered at the house. While Jesus was preaching to the crowd, four men came to the house carrying their sick friend who was lying on his bed paralyzed (Mk. 2:1-3; Lu. 5:18). Clearly, he could not come to Jesus on his own. Many people are like the paralyzed man – something formidable stands in the way of their coming to Jesus. The enemy has them spiritually paralyzed – spiritually immobilized and bound to a bed of hopelessness. If left to themselves, they may never come to Jesus. Who will help them find their way to the Lord? Someone must take an interest in them and make the difference in their lives. Consider the effort that was required to help this one soul. First of all, it took four men to bring one soul to the Lord. Clearly, each man carried one corner of the bed. Each one carried his part of the load and bore the burden for their friend. God is looking for faithful people who will spiritually bear up and encourage the feeble and faint (Ga. 6:1-2). We must reach out to help the weak and weary, bringing them to Jesus in order to be healed. In this case, however, by the time they arrived, they could not enter the house because the crowd was blocking the entrance. Of course, these men could have easily given up and returned home. But this would mean giving up on their friend, giving up on Jesus, and ultimately giving up on themselves. Genuine faith moves us to faithful action. They could have accepted defeat; but real faith in Christ found a way. Rather than hanging their head low in despair, these men continued to look up in faith and expectation. Their faith took them higher, above their circumstances, up to the rooftop. Genuine faith inspires us to rise to the occasion and do whatever is necessary in order to help others find Jesus. These men removed the roof tiling and let down their friend to the Lord (Mk. 2:3-4; Lu. 5:19). What did all of this mean to Jesus? “When Jesus saw their faith” (Mk. 2:5) – their actions translated into faith for the healing and salvation of their friend. We must have enough faith to move us toward the salvation and healing of unsaved family and friends. Indeed, the world is looking for answers to their sicknesses, problems, and suffering. They look to medicine, therapy, philosophy, and nature, to name a few, whereas the ultimate answer for the healing of mankind is the Lord Jesus Christ (Ex. 15:26). Even if a physician is consulted, it is Christ who ultimately heals. We must be convinced of this truth! Whether they realize it or not, the sinner and unbelieving are counting on our steadfast faith to make the difference in their lives. We should therefore be willing to go the extra mile in order to bring them to Christ, our healer (Mt. 5:41).

Scripture Study

Paralyzed people – Mk. 2:1-3; Lu. 5:18

Bringing them to Jesus – Mk. 2:3-4; Lu. 5:19; Ga. 6:1-2

Faith to make the difference – Mk. 2:5; Lu. 5:20; Ex. 15:26; Mt. 5:41

Conclusion

The story of the paralyzed man with his experience of salvation and healing places great emphasis on the faith of friends. Our faith plays a critical role in the deliverance of others. As we exercise faith in Christ, we are leading the way for others to come to Jesus. In turn, as we bring lost people to the Lord, God will honor our faith, both saving and healing those who look to him for their deliverance (Mk. 2:6-12).

Faith-N-Focus : *E-quip Your Faith*

Adult Bible Studies

"Healings, Part Two"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Todd D. McDonald

“Gratitude”

Introduction

Gratitude is an attitude of appreciation and thankfulness for that which one has received from another. When a recipient has a sense of being unworthy, he genuinely appreciates the gift and the giver. Appreciation should be expressed and is often accompanied by the words “thank you.” Saying “thank you” is more than an appropriate sentiment; it acknowledges the value of what has been given. When we receive and then express gratitude, we recognize that we have undeservingly received something of worth. Thus, gratitude is the opposite of entitlement and privilege. When we receive healing from the Lord, faith in Jesus Christ should produce gratitude in our hearts.

Key Verse

“And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God” (Lu. 17:15).

Lesson Summary

On his way to Jerusalem as he entered an unnamed village, Jesus encountered ten lepers. How long they had suffered in this pitiful condition is uncertain. The Scriptures only describe their shunned condition — the people “stood afar off” (Lu. 17:12) — and the fact that one of the men was a Samaritan (v. 16). The story reveals how all ten of the lepers were healed. They cried out to Jesus, and he said, “Go show yourselves unto the priests” (v. 14). When they believed and obeyed, going to the priests, the men were healed (vv. 11-14). They received a life-altering blessing from the Lord that they could never attain for themselves. Does God owe us anything? As Jesus explained, “We are unprofitable servants” (Lu. 17:10). Anything we receive from the Lord is by his grace and mercy – blessings which we do not deserve. The lepers cried out to Jesus, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us” (v. 13). When we believe in Jesus for our healing, we are appealing to his tender mercy and compassion toward us. He endured suffering for our healing (Is. 53:5). As our faithful high priest who suffered in the flesh, he understands our suffering and knows how to help us. We not only believe in his ability to heal, but we also believe that he truly cares for our needs (He. 2:17-18; 4:15-16). Although ten were healed, only one man, a Samaritan, returned to glorify God (Lu. 17:15-16). Why did the other nine fail to return and give thanks to Jesus Christ? Were they truly thankful for their healing? When we consider the response of Jesus, the depth of their gratitude appears insufficient to produce a public display of thanks and praise, for Jesus said, “Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger” (vv. 17-18). Because he was healed by the Lord, the Samaritan expressed his gratitude in the following ways: 1) he returned to Jesus, 2) he lifted his voice in praise to God, 3) he fell down at the feet of Jesus, and 4) he gave thanks to Jesus. Because he returned and gave thanks, the Samaritan’s healing was confirmed by the great high priest: “Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole” (v. 19). In Luke 17:5, the apostles said to Jesus, “Increase our faith.” How much faith does healing require? Jesus explained the power of faith in terms of a tiny, mustard seed: “If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you” (Lu. 17:6). Healing does not require a great, big faith in God, but rather faith in a great, big God. The one leper who turned back exercised faith in the power and compassion of Christ to heal his body. However, his faith not only resulted in healing but also in a genuine expression of gratitude.

Scripture Study

Jesus healed the lepers – Lu. 17:11-14

Jesus’ mercy and compassion – Lu. 17:10, 13; Is. 53:5; He. 2:17-18; 4:15-16

Giving praise and thanks to the Lord – Lu. 17:15-18

Faith and gratitude – Lu. 17:19, 5-6; Ps. 103:1-5

Conclusion

“Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s” (Ps. 103:1-5). As our healer, Jesus Christ is worthy of all praise and thanksgiving.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies "Essentials"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Todd D. McDonald

“Healings, Part Three”

Lesson Outlines

December 1

Topic: *By Prayer and Fasting*

Texts: Mt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 17:14-21; Mk. 9:14-29; 1 Jn. 5:13-15; He. 11:1, 6; Ro. 8:24

Key Verse: Mt. 17:21

Main Point: Spiritual deliverance and healing comes by prayer and fasting.

December 8

Topic: *Cry Out to Jesus*

Texts: Mk. 10:46-52; Mk. 1:40-42; 2:10-12; 5:6-8, 40-42; 7:33-35; 8:22-25; Ps. 27:7; 33:18-22; 34:15; Lu. 11:8-9; 18:5-7

Key Verse: Mk. 10:48

Main Point: Crying out in faith will gain the attention of Jesus.

December 15

Topic: *Touching Jesus*

Texts: Lu. 6:17-19; 8:43-48; Mt. 9:20-22; 14:35-36; Mk. 5:24-34; 6:56; Ac. 19:11-12; He. 11:8

Key Verse: Lu. 8:46

Main Point: To be healed, we must reach out and touch Jesus in faith and confidence for our healing.

December 22

Topic: *For the Glory of God*

Texts: Jn. 9:1-11; Job 1:1; Ge. 3:15-19; 1 Pe. 5:7-11; Ga. 6:7; Mt. 7:1-2; Ro. 8:28; 2 Co. 12:9-10; Ja. 1:3-4

Key Verse: Jn. 9:3

Main Point: When we are healed from sickness and suffering, it serves to glorify the Lord.

December 29

Topic: *Look on Us*

Texts: Ac. 3:1-16; Mt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15, 18; Lu. 24:48-49; Ac. 1:8; Mt. 9:35; Ac. 4:29-30; Ja. 5:14-15; Mt. 11:1-6; Ac. 4:12; Ep. 5:23; Jn. 17:18; Lu. 10:30-32

Key Verse: Ac. 3:4

Main Point: Hurting people are looking to the church, and we must be spiritually prepared to minister to their needs.

In this month of *Faith-N-Focus*, we conclude the series entitled *Healings*. Certainly, faith is necessary to receive healing from the Lord. Sometimes, the gravity and severity of our need challenges our faith. We believe that God is able to heal, but we have a difficult time exercising our faith in order to receive healing from the Lord. Jesus taught the principle of prayer and fasting as a means of enabling our faith, particularly when spiritual deliverance and healing is needed.

Faith – the ability to hope for something – is not static, but rather dynamic; and it affects our actions and the way we live our lives. Therefore, genuine faith in Christ for our healing moves us to faithful action. In the gospels, faith expressed itself in concrete ways, such as when people cried out to Jesus and reached out to touch him. Although Jesus is not physically with us in the flesh, faith nevertheless enables us to cry out and touch Jesus for our healing today. “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (He. 4:15).

When we are healed from sickness and oppression, we rejoice and praise the Lord because we are delivered from suffering. However, healing accomplishes something even greater than our relief; it also magnifies and glorifies the name and power of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (Jn. 14:13). Therefore, we need to be ready and willing to represent Jesus Christ to those who are weak and weary in the world. Hurting people are looking to the church for answers, and we must be spiritually prepared to minister to their needs. We they look to us and receive their healing in Jesus’ name, the Lord will receive glory and honor in and through the church.



To receive your free monthly email subscription to Faith-N-Focus curriculum, please send your request to sundayschoolservices@zionassemblychurchofgod.com. In addition to the Adult Bible Studies, you will also receive Faith-N-Focus for Teens and for Young Disciples. For more information about Zion Assembly Church of God, please visit our website at www.zionassemblychurchofgod.com.

Faith-N-Focus : *E-quip Your Faith*

Adult Bible Studies

"Healings, Part Three"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Todd D. McDonald

Introduction

“By Prayer and Fasting”

Following Jesus Christ means being his disciple, and following his discipline and way of life. Certainly, prayer is a primary part and central focus of our Christian discipline. Jesus dedicated himself to prayer, sometimes praying throughout the night (Lu. 6:12). Though prayer itself can often be a challenging discipline, perhaps the greater challenge of our Christian discipline is prayer with fasting. In today’s lesson, we will consider why we need to pray and fast.

Key Verse

“Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting” (Mt. 17:21).

Lesson Summary

Is there a formula for being healed? Did the Lord give us a procedure to follow in order to be healed? If healing could be obtained merely on the basis of a certain procedure or formula, the whole world would be healed. Instead, we receive healing on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ (Mk. 9:23). We certainly cannot make God heal us against his will, but we can obtain healing from the Lord by exercising faith in him (1 Jn. 5:13-15). The writer of Hebrews explained the nature of our faith, saying, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (He. 11:1). When you hope for something or place your hope in someone, but you have no observable proof for your hope, this is faith. Faith should be built upon truth, but by its very nature faith is not observable (Ro. 8:24). In other words, God is real, and this truth is factual. But we have no way of empirically proving God’s existence. Therefore, we experience the reality of God and all of his blessings by faith (He. 11:6). Faith is the primary requirement for healing. But what do we do when our faith is weak (Mt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31)? After all, some needs are greater than others, and exercising faith can be more challenging at times. In Matthew 17:14-21, a man came to Jesus, kneeling, and pleading for his son to be cured. The nature of the problem was spiritual – his son was possessed by a demon that mentally and physically tormented him. Matthew described him as “lunatic, and sore vexed;” Mark explained that he had a “deaf and dumb” spirit that often convulsed him and attempted to destroy him (Mt. 17:14-15, 18; Mk. 9:17-18, 20-22, 25-26). The man first brought his son to Jesus’ disciples, but they could not cast out the demon and cure him (Mt. 17:16; Mk. 9:18). Jesus responded with great disappointment, saying, “O faithless and perverse generation” (Mt. 17:17; Mk. 9:19). Likewise, when Jesus called upon the father to exercise faith for the healing of his son, the father cried, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mk. 9:23-24). After Jesus cast out the demon and cured the son, the disciples asked, “Why could not we cast him out” (Mt. 17:19; Mk. 9:28)? Jesus blamed their failure on lack of faith – “because of your unbelief” (Mt. 17:20). Jesus taught, “Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not . . . ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive” (Mt. 21:21-22). Jesus said, “And nothing shall be impossible unto you” (Mt. 17:20). However, if we find ourselves in the position of the disciples or this father, needing to believe God for spiritual deliverance but lacking in faith, is there a way to build up our faith in God? “Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting” (Mt. 17:21; Mk. 9:29). Jesus instructed us to pray and fast for spiritual deliverance. Some satanic strongholds are so strong and powerful that exercising faith to cast out the demons requires prayer and fasting.

Scripture Study

Faith and healing – Mk. 9:23; 1 Jn. 5:13-15; He. 11:1, 6; Ro. 8:24

When faith is weak – Mt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 17:14-20; Mk. 9:14-28

By prayer and fasting – Mt. 17:21; Mk. 9:29

Conclusion

Satan has many captives, people who are spiritually bound, not only by sin but by demonic strongholds in their lives. Spiritual bondage keeps them sick, oppressed, and tormented physically, mentally, and emotionally. They need to be delivered. Spiritual deliverance and healing comes by prayer and fasting.

Faith-N-Focus : E-quip Your Faith

Adult Bible Studies

"Healings, Part Three"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Todd D. McDonald

“Cry Out to Jesus”

Introduction

In today's lesson, we will study the healing of blind Bartimaeus. Through this healing, Jesus Christ demonstrates his power and ability to turn our lives in a completely different direction. The story explains a miraculous change – a dramatic transformation from a blind beggar to a born again believer. In Mark 10:46-52, we will see how one man's healing began with a desperate cry.

Key Verse

“And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me” (Mk. 10:48).

Lesson Summary

As Jesus left Jericho, blind Bartimaeus sat along the roadside begging. His physical impairment (blindness) kept him enslaved to his poverty and pitiful circumstances. He received no government assistance each month. No agencies provided for his welfare and living. Apparently, begging was his main source of survival. Day by day as the people passed, he sat by the highway asking for alms – “Alms for the poor; alms for the blind.” Apparently, he became known by his sad condition; he was *blind* Bartimaeus. No doubt, his emotional and social afflictions were as great as his physical illness. He had no sense of pride and dignity, for he was a beggar and marked by the tools of his trade: a beggar's garment and his beckoning cry (Mk. 10:46-47). Spiritually speaking, many dwell in the blindness, poverty, and misery of sin, begging for a better life. They hope for some kind of temporary relief from their spiritual poverty, only to find they are trapped in their miserable circumstances, not knowing how to escape from their sinful imprisonment. When Bartimaeus heard that Jesus was passing on the street, his cry suddenly changed. No longer was he asking for money. He was now pleading for mercy. “Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me” (v. 47). Money was not the cure for his condition. Blind Bartimaeus needed mercy. The Lord's mercy and grace was the ultimate answer for his problems (Ps. 27:7; 33:18-22). What had he heard about Jesus of Nazareth that moved him to cry out? Mark recorded many healings and miracles in his gospel. Perhaps Bartimaeus had heard how Jesus healed those with leprosy (Mark 1:40-42), healed the paralyzed (Mark 2:10-12), delivered those who were demon-possessed (Mark 5:6-8), raised the dead (Mark 5:40-42), healed the deaf mute (Mark 7:33-35), and especially healed the blind (Mark 8:22-25). Clearly, he knew that Jesus was able to heal the sick and diseased. When Bartimaeus cried to Jesus, many tried to discourage him, but this did not prevent him from crying out. Their opposition only provoked him to cry out all the more (10:48). In Psalm 34:15, David wrote, “The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.” Crying out in faith will gain the attention of Jesus. Notice, his crying actually stopped Jesus in his tracks (v. 49). Clearly, Bartimaeus would not be denied. Knowing Jesus could help him, he shamelessly maintained his persistent plea until the Lord called for him. True faith is persistent (Lu. 11:8-9; 18:5-7). Casting away his beggar's garment, an expression of his faith, he came to Jesus and asked to receive his sight (Mk. 10:50-51). He did not come to Jesus clutching onto his beggar's garment. Instead, he cast away this hopeless garment of despair. When he came to Jesus, he did not intend to return to this garment. Figuratively, Bartimaeus released the thing that held him captive, and casting it away by faith, he left his security blanket and came to Jesus. Likewise, we must come to Jesus in faith with the expectation of healing and deliverance in our lives.

Scripture Study

Blind Bartimaeus – Mk. 10:46

Jesus, the healer – Mk. 10:47; Ps. 27:7; 33:18-22; Mk. 1:40-42; 2:10-12; 5:6-8, 40-42; 7:33-35; 8:22-25

Crying out to Jesus – Mk. 10:48-49; Ps. 34:15; Lu. 11:8-9; 18:5-7

Expecting to be healed – Mk. 10:50-51

Conclusion

Bartimaeus came to Jesus a blind beggar, but then he “followed Jesus in the way” (Mk. 10:52), as a born again believer and disciple of Christ. When he came to Jesus and was healed, his life was radically transformed because he placed his faith in the One who could change his life forever. Jesus still changes lives today. Will you trust him and cry out?

Faith-N-Focus : *E-quip Your Faith*

Adult Bible Studies

"Healings, Part Three"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Todd D. McDonald

Introduction

“Touching Jesus”

On occasion, doctors and psychologists talk about the power of human touch. Physical touch is a powerful influence in our lives. In today’s lesson, we will consider a different kind of touch — a divine touch — when a woman touched Jesus in a special way, the results were powerful.

Key Verse

“And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me” (Lu. 8:46).

Lesson Summary

In Luke 8:43-44, Jesus instantly healed a woman who was suffering a long-term illness: “And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanchèd.” Matthew’s gospel explains, “And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole” (Mt. 9:20-21). On the surface, the woman’s behavior, that is, touching Jesus’ garment in order to be healed, may seem a little strange. After spending all of her money on physicians without any cure, we see her reaching out to touch a man’s garment with the expectation of healing. To the unbelieving, her actions may have seemed absurd, but they were not uncommon among those who believed in Jesus Christ. In Mark 6:56 the Bible explains that everywhere Jesus went, they brought the sick to be healed, and begged “that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.” Therefore, the incident of the woman’s healing was also experienced by many others. The sick and suffering were reaching out to touch Jesus’ garment, and when they touched only the border (or hem), they were healed. Was there some kind of healing power in Jesus’ clothes themselves? (For additional discussion, consider Acts 19:11-12.) This woman was not being superstitious at all. Clearly, she believed that Jesus had so much power to heal her that she needed only to touch his clothes in order to be made whole. By reaching out in this way, she was exercising and expressing her faith. Faith moved her to push her way through the crowd in order to grasp his garment (Mk. 5:24, 27). Indeed, faith moves a believer to act in faith and receive from the Lord (Note: Consider Abraham, He. 11:8). When she came forward to confess that she was healed, Jesus responded, “Daughter, be of good comfort: **thy faith** hath made thee whole; go in peace” (Lu. 8:47-48; Mk. 5:33-34; Mt. 9:22). Christ’s words reveal the power of our faith in his ability – “Your faith has healed you.” Surprisingly, when the woman was healed, Jesus asked, “Who touched me?” (Lu. 8:45). “Who touched my clothes” (Mk. 5:30). Many people in the crowd were touching Jesus, but her touch was different because her faith in Christ caused his virtue to flow out of him (Lu. 8:46; 6:17-19). He did not see her touching him; Jesus did not have physical perception of her touch. Instead, Jesus spiritually felt her touch; he actually knew when she touched the border of his garment, because he knew when virtue moved out of him and into her (Mk. 5:30-32). During Jesus’ earthly ministry, many who were sick and suffering were physically reaching out to touch his garment; all those who reached out in faith and spiritually touched him were healed (Mt. 14:35-36).

Scripture Study

Reaching out – Lu. 8:43-44; Mt. 9:20-21; Mk. 6:56

Exercising Faith – Ac. 19:11-12; Mk. 5:24, 27, 33-34; He. 11:8; Lu. 8:47-48; Mt. 9:22

Touching Jesus – Lu. 6:17-19; 8:45-46; Mk. 5:30-32; Mt. 14:35-36

Conclusion

The woman with the issue of blood touched Jesus by faith, and, in turn, because of her faith, Jesus touched her. The results were indeed powerful. She received a divine touch from the Lord. To be healed, we must reach out and touch Jesus in faith and confidence for our healing.

Faith-N-Focus : *E-quip Your Faith*

Adult Bible Studies

"Healings, Part Three"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Todd D. McDonald

Introduction

"For the Glory of God"

The world of full of suffering people –physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. When we see people suffering with great needs, what do we think in regard to their suffering? In today's lesson, we will gain the perspective of Christ and learn to minister to others in their suffering for the glory of God.

Key Verse

"Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be manifest in him" (Jn. 9:3).

Lesson Summary

Jesus' disciples saw a blind man, a beggar, and quickly jumped to an erroneous conclusion, thinking that he or his parents must have sinned in some great way that resulted in his blindness (Jn. 9:1-2, 8). The disciples were thinking along the lines of the Hindu concept of *karma*: By doing enough good deeds, good things will happen to you; but doing too many bad deeds will result in bad things happening in your life. So if you are blind, you must have done something really bad to bring blindness on yourself; or perhaps, if you were born blind, then your parents must have done something really evil that caused you to be blind. However, "good" things sometimes happen to sinful people; and "bad" things sometimes unfortunately happen to righteous people, take Job for example (Job 1:1). Therefore, we sometimes suffer not necessarily because we have committed some great sin, but rather due to the fall of humanity in the Garden of Eden, the results of a sin-cursed world, and our spiritual adversary Satan (Ge. 3:15-19; 1 Pe. 5:7-11). Of course, this point does not preclude the rebellious actions and sinful lifestyle that may result in natural, negative consequences or God's judgment: for we reap what we sow (Ga. 6:7). God is a just God in all his ways. Nevertheless, the bottom line is that both the righteous and the wicked suffer in this fallen world. Many people suffer in various ways beyond their ultimate control. Therefore, we simply should not judge one another when suffering adversity, because God is judge. In fact, passing judgment on others and their families will not help them or benefit us in the least (Mt. 7:1-2). Since suffering is unavoidable in this world, Jesus does not want us to focus on why we suffer adversity as much as he wants us to see how God can work through our needs and suffering, and, in turn, draw us near to himself. Jesus wants us to see how our needs can actually serve to glorify God in our lives (Jn. 9:3). Certainly, none of us desire adversity, sickness, or afflictions, but from a divine, eternal perspective, can anything good come from our suffering? How can we make sense of our suffering? Jesus is the answer for humanity's needs – he is the light in a dark world (vv. 4-5). Only the Lord can take a bad situation and turn it for good (Ro. 8:28). Only the Lord can take a person's greatest weakness and turn it into their greatest strength (2 Co. 12:10). Only the Lord can demonstrate his power and grace through our suffering and frailty (2 Co. 12:9). Only the Lord can take the trials of our lives and use them to perfect our faith (Ja. 1:3-4). Therefore, human adversity is a divine opportunity for Christ to work in and through our lives. The disciples were focused on the man's human condition, that is, the cause of his blindness and suffering. However, Jesus was focused on the divine opportunity – what God could do through this unfortunate situation. After Jesus spat in the dirt and made clay, he smeared it on the eyes of the blind man, and then sent him to wash away the clay from his eyes. The man washed in the pool of Siloam and received his sight (Jn. 9:6-7, 10-11).

Scripture Study

Suffering: the human condition – Jn. 9:1-2, 8; Job 1:1; Ge. 3:15-19; 1 Pe. 5:7-11; Ga. 6:7; Mt. 7:1-2

Suffering: the glory of God – Jn. 9:3-5; Ro. 8:28; 2 Co. 12:9-10; Ja. 1:3-4

Suffering: divine opportunity – Jn. 9:6-7, 10-11

Conclusion

Jesus miraculously healed the blind man. At that point, the cause of his blindness was irrelevant and immaterial. All that mattered was that he was healed and could glorify God in his healing. Indeed, healing serves an even greater purpose than obtaining wellness. When we are healed from sickness and suffering, it serves to glorify and exalt the Lord and his mighty power.

Faith-N-Focus : *E-quip Your Faith*

Adult Bible Studies

"Healings, Part Three"

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

Writer: Todd D. McDonald

Introduction

“Look on Us”

If Jesus walked the streets of your city today, what kind of ministry would he have? No doubt, he would do the same kind of works he did in Galilee. His ministry was one of “teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people” (Mt. 9:35). He did this in homes, in the temple, in synagogues, on the hillside, and in the streets. He used every available opportunity to fulfill his mission. But Jesus is not physically walking the streets of our cities today; instead he is fulfilling his mission through you and me. Lost and hurting people are looking to us.

Key Verse

“And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us” (Ac. 3:4).

Lesson Summary

Not long after the Day of Pentecost, Peter and John were going to the temple for prayer around 3:00 pm. A beggar, a lame man since birth, stopped them at the Beautiful gate as they entered the temple. When the man asked for money, Peter said, “Look on us” (Ac. 3:4). The man expected to receive money, but he received so much more than he could have imagined. Although Peter gave him no silver or gold, he did give him an invaluable possession; Peter shared the power of Jesus Christ with this poor, pitiful soul. He said, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk” (v. 6). When Peter took the man by the right hand and pulled him up, then his feet and ankles were strengthened. Peter declared that faith in Jesus’ name had healed the lame man – “And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all” (3:16). Do we really have what it takes to minister to hurting people? As Christ’s representatives in the world, being his church, we must encourage the lost and hurting to look on us for their answers. If they cannot look to us and find Jesus, then where will they go to find the Lord? We must reach out and give Christ’s strength to the weary and weak. No longer was this man laying and begging at the gate of the temple, but now he “entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God” (vv. 1-8). God used Peter, an ordinary fisherman, to bring forth this life-changing transformation. How? When Jesus commanded his disciples to go and preach the gospel to all nations (Mt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15), he empowered them to accomplish this mission by baptizing them with the Holy Ghost (Lu. 24:48-49; Ac. 1:8). With the power of the Spirit, he sent them forth to continue his ministry of preaching the gospel and healing the sick (Mt. 9:35; Ac. 4:29-30). In other words, Jesus gave them his authority and his power. By this same authority and power, the church must be spiritually prepared and ready to administer healing in the name of Jesus (Ac. 3:4, 6; Mk. 16:18; Ja. 5:14-15). Christ is the one and only Savior, and there is none other (Mt. 11:1-6; Ac. 4:12; Ep. 5:23). Likewise, the church is authorized and empowered by Christ to carry out his mission, and there is none other. Should the world then look to another besides the church for their healing and deliverance when the Lord has sent the church into the world with the good news of salvation and healing through Jesus Christ (Jn. 17:18)? When we see the poor, oppressed, sick, and suffering, we must not turn aside and ignore their needs, as if God has commissioned another in our place (Lu. 10:30-32). Rather, we must look them in the eyes and say, “Look on us.”

Scripture Study

Healing through faith in Jesus’ name – Ac. 3:1-16

Authorized and empowered – Mt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15; Lu. 24:48-49; Ac. 1:8; Mt. 9:35; Ac. 4:29-30

Look on us – Ac. 3:4, 6; Mk. 16:18; Ja. 5:14-15; Mt. 11:1-6; Ac. 4:12; Ep. 5:23; Jn. 17:18; Lu. 10:30-32

Conclusion

Today, the mission of Christ is incumbent upon us; there is still much work to be done. The Lord is counting on the church to accept our responsibility in fulfilling his Great Commission (Mt. 24:14). The world desperately needs the salvation and healing that come through Christ alone, and people are looking to the church for the answers. We must share the hope of Christ with the lost, sick, and oppressed, declaring, “Look on us.” Indeed, hurting people are depending on the church, and we must be spiritually prepared to minister to their needs.