

FACING THE FUTURE WITH HOPE

(TEACHER)

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BIBLE LESSONS FOR ADULTS

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CONTENTS

1. What if the Worst Comes?
2. Coping with Change
3. Keeping the Faith
4. Sustained by Hope
5. Our Need to be Reconciled
6. Reconciled Through Jesus Christ
7. Alive in Christ
8. Freedom in Christ
9. Secure in God's Love
10. Together Under God
11. The Reconciled Life
12. Walking in Love
13. Our Ministry of Reconciliation

CHAPTER ONE

WHAT IF THE WORST COMES?

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Habakkuk 1-3

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Habakkuk 1:2-5,12-13;2:1-4

MEMORY VERSE

"Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe..."
(Habakkuk 1:5).

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to rely on God for the answers to the problems in life.

TEACHING AIDS: Have pencils and paper ready for the students.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

The book of Habakkuk is a very interesting one. Habakkuk, alone among all the Old Testament prophets takes the position of representing Israel to God. All the other prophets represented God to Israel. The meaning here is that Habakkuk spoke to God. He had many questions for God. And God answered his questions.

The events in the book took place because of the wickedness of Judah's kings. God seemingly had allowed these kings free reign with his chosen people. Sin was rampant in the land. Habakkuk saw all of this and questioned God as to why he had allowed such a thing to happen.

God answered that he had prepared a heathen nation, the Chaldeans (the Babylonians) to conquer Judah as punishment for their sin. He further said that he would destroy the Chaldeans for doing this.

God told Habakkuk that he was in charge of all things. Even a heathen nation would do his bidding.

God also reminded Habakkuk that he had his own schedule. While events evidently did not fit the timetable of Habakkuk, they did fit God's.

Habakkuk 1:2-5 is a conversation between Habakkuk and God. Habakkuk spoke, verses 2-4, saying that he could not understand why God was not doing anything about the terrible conditions that existed in the land. He saw that the law was numbed or chilled, unable to take action against the violence and oppression.

In verse 5 God spoke to Habakkuk, telling him that he was at work. The meaning evidently is that he was about to do something

about the situation. "Wonder and be astounded" might be translated to "shudder and be shocked."

Habakkuk 1:12-13 shows that God's response to Habakkuk's first question had confused him. In these verses, he asked more questions.

First, Habakkuk asked God if he was really in charge of all things. Then he expressed confidence that God would see that all things came out right for the Jewish nation. God would not let his chosen people perish, nor would he allow his purpose for them to go unfulfilled. He called God a rock to show that he was reliable in every situation.

In verse 13, Habakkuk asked God how he could look with favour upon such a terrible nation as Chaldea. He was saying that although Judah was very bad, it was good in comparison to the depravity and utter wickedness of other nations.

Verses 1-4 of chapter two tells us that Habakkuk had taken a stand in a "watchtower." This probably means that he had taken a firm stand upon a solid foundation which is a bit above the usual level of life. From there he attentively looked to God for an answer and pondered how he would answer God.

When God saw Habakkuk in his "watchtower" he began to instruct the prophet. The answer was in the form of a vision. A vision simply means to see or to behold something that is normally beyond the ability of humans to see or to behold.

The vision was for the whole nation, not just for the prophet. God told Habakkuk, therefore, to write the vision down. He was to use tablets, and he was to write upon them clearly and legibly so that anyone hurrying past might read them at a glance.

Verse 4 is the answer to all the questions that Habakkuk had. It is the explanation for all that had troubled the prophet. The Chaldeans would suffer death, while the righteous would live because of their faithfulness.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Write this unfinished sentence on the chalk board or on paper.
"When I have trouble I..."

As your Adults come into the class, ask them to finish the sentence. Some may need a few minutes to think it over. Give them the time they need.

After each member has had a chance to respond to the unfinished sentence, repeat some of the things they said. (Do not say, "Kamau says that when he has trouble he talks it over with his

wife." Rather say: "We have said that when we have trouble we talk it over with our wives, we go to our employers, we talk to the elder in our area, etc.")

Someone might have said they pray when they have troubles. If so, begin there and say that some of us pray when we have troubles. If no one has mentioned talking to God about the matter, say: "We all have ways of helping ourselves in trouble, but the best way to help ourselves is through prayer."

Continue: "Our lesson today is about a time when the Jewish nation was in grave trouble. One man wanted to find a solution to the problems that beset the nation. This man, Habakkuk, took the problems directly to God."

Interpretation

Give each student who can read and write a paper and pencil. Tell them that you are going to have a circle of questions. (Be sure your students are seated in a circle.) Each student is to take one of the verses in the lesson for today. He is to read the verse, then he is to write one question from the verse.

Give the students a few minutes to do this. (The first student will write a question from Habakkuk 1:2, the next Habakkuk 1:3 and so on.)

When they finish their work, ask one adult to read all the verses. Then ask the first student to ask the question that he has written down to the second student. Make sure that student answers properly. The second student then asks the third adult his question, and so on around the circle.

When the class has finished the circle of questions, they should have learned a lot about the verses. Say. "Judah was in turmoil because of the sins of her kings. The nation was filled with sin. Habakkuk asked God first why he allowed such a situation to continue. Then God answered that he had a plan. The plan would be for the Chaldeans to conquer Judah.

That confused Habakkuk further, and so he asked God why he would allow such a sinful nation to conquer his chosen people, the Jews. God told him that those who lived righteous lives in faithfulness would be saved, while those who were wicked would die spiritually."

Application To Our Lives

Say: "Habakkuk knew where to go when he had problems. He went to God. He looked to God for the answers to all his questions. God was faithful to Habakkuk and answered his questions. I particularly like verse 1 of chapter 2 where Habakkuk went up to his watchtower to wait for his answer. We all should have a watchtower, a place where we can go to talk to God. A watchtower

suggests that Habakkuk lifted himself above the problems enough to see God. We also should be able to do that.

"I wonder how successful we are when we have problems. Are we able to lift ourselves above the problems so that we can see God? We would be more successful if we could do that. I think it would be a good thing for us to practise doing this week. Every time a problem comes up, let us practise prayer. Let us ask God what he has to say about the situation, and let us wait for God to answer.

Close the meeting with prayer.

CHAPTER TWO

COPING WITH CHANGE

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Psalms 137:1-6; Jeremiah 29

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Jeremiah 29:1-11

MEMORY VERSE

"For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11).

TEACHING AIM: Life is constant change. I want my students to experience a deep faith in God so they can live with change knowing God is in control.

TEACHING AIDS: You will begin today to develop a time line. For this you will need a rather long piece of paper. Take sheets of paper and put them together with paste or glue or tape or pins. Put this up on the wall where all the students can see it each time the class meets.

Draw a long line across the paper. This is the time line. Draw one line down and under it write: "Habakkuk complains to God." Your line will look like this: *****NOTE: Insert Graphic.****

During the lesson, you will add another event, so that at the end of the lesson your time line will look like this: *****NOTE: Insert Graphic.*****

Be sure your line looks like the first line at the beginning of the lesson. During the lesson you will add the second event. Save this time line to use again next week. When you finish the line in three weeks, you will have four events written on it.

Also, have small papers and pencils ready to use.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

The events in this lesson from Jeremiah 29:1-11 happened about nine or ten years after Habakkuk went up on the watchtower (from your last lesson). The Chaldeans (Babylonians) had indeed come upon the city of Jerusalem and had taken captive the remnants of the royal family, skilled craftsmen and scholars. These captives had been taken to Babylon.

The captives had been in Babylon for a few years. They were given considerable freedom to move about the city. Among the exiles were some bad prophets. These prophets were telling the people that they would soon return to Jerusalem. This false prophecy was

causing unrest among the exiles. Jeremiah wrote a letter to the exiles to tell them to face the changes that had come into their lives.

Verses 1-3 tell how the letter was sent to Babylon. Elasah was probably the brother of Ahikam who stood up for Jeremiah when he had been arrested (in earlier chapters). Gemariah had the privilege of hearing Baruch read the scroll in his chamber. (See chapter 36:10.)

These two men were probably sent to Nebuchadnezzar from King Zedekiah to carry tribute (tax) to the conquerors. Jeremiah sent his letter with them.

Verses 4-7 begin the letter. They begin with the words, "Thus says the Lord of hosts," which is the usual way prophecies were begun. The Lord told the Jewish people that they were to settle down in Babylon. They would not be coming back to Jerusalem until seventy years had passed. Seventy is one of the numbers in the Bible which means a perfect number. This means that the Lord did not say they would return in exactly seventy years, but rather at the future time that he decided on.

Verses 8-9 are a warning against the false prophets living among the exiles.

Verses 10-11 gave assurance from the Lord that the people were still his chosen people. He had not forgotten them, and he was still making plans for them.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Say: "In chapter one we discussed what we do when we get into trouble. We find that some of us talk to friends, to our wives or husbands, to our pastor or to God. When we talk about our problems, we can usually get help. But the best source for this help is God himself. We said that we always need to pray about every problem. Our lesson today teaches us that God is always concerned about his people.

"The Memory Verse for today is a very good one for us to remember. I want us to write this verse down on paper. Put it some place where you can see it often. It will reassure you."

Give the paper and pencils to the adults. You write the verse on the chalk board or on large paper, and they will copy what you have written. If you have people who cannot read in the class, let someone else copy their verse for them.

Interpretation

Have the students open their Bibles. Ask one to read Jeremiah

29:1-3. Say: "Last week we studied about Habakkuk and how he talked to God about the conditions existing in Judah. What did God tell him?" (God told him that the Chaldeans or Babylonians would conquer the Jewish people.)

Say. "Look at this time line I have drawn. We see that Habakkuk complained to God about 605 B.C. B.C. means before the birth of Christ, and the years are numbered backwards. Soon after God spoke to Habakkuk the Babylonians came in and conquered Jerusalem. Many of the most important members of the city were carried away to Babylon to live in captivity.

"The Jews had been in Babylon for a few years when Jeremiah wrote the letter that these verses tell about. They were not happy there. They wanted to go home. Among them were some false prophets who were telling them that they would soon go home. This was not God's plan so he told Jeremiah to write to them. Let us read verses 4-7 now and see what God advised the Jews to do."

Have the verses read, then say: "The prophecies were always begun with the words, 'Thus says the Lord.' This showed the Jews that the words were God's. What did God tell the people to do?" Let the adults talk about this. Conclude with them that he said for them to forget about going home for awhile and face up to the changes in their lives.

Ask: "Why did God tell them to pray for Babylon?" (To show that he would hear and answer their prayers even if they were not prayed from Jerusalem.)

Have verses 8 and 9 read. Say: "These false prophets were leading the people astray. Do you see how this teaching would disrupt the peace?" Let the students talk about this.

Have verses 10-11 read. Say: "Then God gave the Jews the comforting words here. He would return the Jews to Jerusalem. He had plans for them. How reassuring that must have been for these exiles!"

Application To Our Lives

Say: "Now we will add to our time line." Add the years and the events as shown in your teaching aids section.

Say: "You will note that the number of years decrease as time moves on. We will add events to this time line for the next two weeks.

"God still has plans for his children, us. When we have to face changes, we may think sometimes that God has put us somewhere and forgotten us. That is never the case. He loves us and will always be there as the changes come. One of the greatest changes we see is the of our own bodies. Other changes come as our nation progresses. God loves us through all the changes that come to us.

What are some of the changes that you have had to face? Did God see you through them?" Give the students time to discuss these questions. Then pray that God will continue to help the adults in your class to live strong Christian lives in the midst of change.

CHAPTER THREE

KEEPING THE FAITH

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Daniel 1,6

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Daniel 1:3-5,9-10,18-19;6:10,21-22

MEMORY VERSE

"...Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshack, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set at nought the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God" (Daniel 3:28).

TEACHING AIM: Many Christians fail to practise their faith. I want my students to begin to exercise their faith more often and with greater effect.

TEACHING AIDS: You will use the time line used last week. Leave it where the students can see it. After you use it this week it will look like the one below: *****NOTE: Insert Graphic.*****

You will also use the chalk board for another activity.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

The book of Daniel is about events that happened about the same time as Jeremiah wrote his letter to the exiles. (See chapter two.)

The king of Babylon, King Nebuchadnezzar, conquered Jerusalem and sent its people into captivity. At first he chose only skilled craftsmen, scholars and members of the royal family. This was the first captivity. Later he came again and took other captives. Daniel was taken in the first captivity.

Daniel 3-5 tell us that the king decided to choose some pages from among the exiles. Pages are young men trained to stay in the king's presence for the purpose of doing any necessary work. It was the custom to choose youths from among captured nations so they could learn to be loyal to the king.

Ashpenaz was the chief of the eunuchs. He was in charge of the royal harem. He was also to train the pages.

The pages chosen were from the sons of the king as well as from among his nephews and other kinsmen. They were to be especially intelligent and good-looking. It was necessary that they learn the language of the Babylonians so they could serve well in the king's court. All the wisdom of the Babylonians would be taught

them.

As pages, the Jewish boys would be fed from the king's own bounty. This meant they would be given the same kind of food the king ate. This would be heathen food which was considered unclean by the Jewish people.

Verses 9-10 show how Jewish writing often portrays Jews as being in special favour with the officials of the kingdom. Joseph was favoured in Egypt, Esther in Ahasuerus's court and Ezra at the court of Artaxerxes. Daniel is the one in this story who found favour with the chief eunuch. In previous verses, the four boys had refused the king's food. In verse 10 the eunuch expressed his fear that the boys would not prosper well without the king's food. If they were to become sick he might well have his head cut off by the king.

Verses 18-19 are about the end of the three year period of training. The youths were brought before the king. He found the four boys to be much smarter and better in every way than the other youths.

Chapter 6 of Daniel concerns Daniel at a later time in his life. He had become very trusted by the king.

The other advisors to the king became jealous of Daniel and plotted together to get Daniel removed. They had the king sign a law that said no one could ask for anything from anyone but Darius, the king, for thirty days.

Daniel 6:10 says that Daniel went ahead with his usual prayers even after the law went into effect. The lesson in the story is that God blesses those who are loyal to him.

Daniel was put into the lions' den because he broke the law. In verses 21-22 we learn that God prevented the death of Daniel by shutting the mouths of the lions. Although the king came to the den in great anxiety he found that Daniel was in great peace among the lions.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Use the time line to begin your lesson. Ask the students: "Do you remember our time line?" Have one of them explain to the others what the time line shows. (It shows in a picture the passing of events).

Say: "Today we will add another event. This event happened at about the same time as Jeremiah wrote his letter to the exiles." Add 586 B.C. and Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah to the time line as it is in "Teaching Aids."

Continue: "Our lesson today teaches us that we need to keep our faith strong. Unless we use our faith it will grow weak. The young men we will study today used their faith in God, and it made them and their faith stronger."

Interpretation

Ask your students to open their Bibles to Daniel 1. Say: "We may already know the stories in our lesson today. We will see how much we already know." Have a student read verses 3-5. Ask another student to tell when this event took place. He may need to look back at verses 1 and 2 to find out. Make sure the class understands that this is the first captivity of the Jews in Babylon. Explain that not all the Jews were taken in the first captivity. Recall with the students that Jerusalem had been ruled by bad kings. Habakkuk had asked the Lord how long the situation would go on. God answered that the Chaldeans (Babylonians) would conquer them. This happened and the people were taken away in a series of captivities.

Have someone read verses 9-10. Say: "What happened between verses 5 and 9?" Let the students scan their students, books and their Bibles to find out. Ask: "What happened in these verses?"

Have someone read verses 18-19. Ask: "What happened between verse 9 and 18?" Then ask: "What happened in these verses?"

Ask: "What can we learn from this story?" (that the boys were faithful to God at a time when it would have been easy to be unfaithful and "follow the crowd")

Say: "Many years later when Daniel had become a man, he was given another chance to test his faith. He had become an advisor to the king. King Nebuchadnezzar had died and King Darius had begun to reign. He loved Daniel very much and trusted him more than he trusted his other advisors. They became jealous and wanted to get rid of Daniel. What did they do?" The students will find the answer in Daniel 6. After they tell about the law, Ask: "What difference would this law make to Daniel?" (He would have to choose between God and the king.)

Ask a student to read verse 10 for the class. Ask: "Was Daniel faithful to God?" After the students answer, ask: "Was this a difficult thing for Daniel to do?" Let the students discuss this for a few minutes. Ask: "What was the punishment that Daniel would suffer?"

Have a student read verses 21-22. Ask: "What happened to Daniel?" After the students answer, ask: "Was he at peace with himself after his long night in the den?" Then, ask: "Who was the anxious one?" (Darius)

Say: "Daniel again proved to be faithful to God. And his faith made him stronger."

Write the following list on the chalk board or on paper:

Daniel refuses to obey the king's law.

The boys refuse the king's food.

The Jewish boys are chosen.

King Nebuchadnezzar decides to have pages chosen.

Daniel prays to God.

The chief eunuch asks the boys to eat the king's food.

The boys become smarter and better than the others.

Daniel spends the night with lions.

The king finds Daniel safe.

Tell the students that the events are not in the right order. As a revision of the lesson, they will number them in the order in which they occurred.

Application To Our Lives

Say: "What does our lesson teach us about the way that we should live?" Allow discussion.

Ask: "How do we exercise our faith?" (by witnessing to others, attending church, studying the Bible, teaching others, etc.)

Say: "I challenge you to practise your faith this week."

Close with prayer.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUSTAINED BY HOPE

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Jeremiah 32; Ezra 1

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Jeremiah 32:6-11; Ezra 1:1-4

MEMORY VERSE

"And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord, 'For he is good, for his steadfast love endures for ever toward Israel...'" (Ezra 3:11).

TEACHING AIM: My students need to know that God is strong and able to see them through all their troubles.

TEACHING AIDS: You will use a time line again. After you add this week's event, your time line will look like this: *****NOTE: Insert Graphic.*****

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

The two Scriptures, Jeremiah 32:6-11 and Ezra 1:1-4, in today's lesson are separated by many years. The Jeremiah incident occurred just about the time that Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians, 587 B.C. The Ezra event happened in 538 B.C. fifty-five years later. The very fact that they separated by time is of importance to this lesson because in the Jeremiah account, hope and faith in God is expressed. In the Ezra event, hope and faith are realized.

Jeremiah had been shut up in prison in Jeremiah 32:6-11. Babylon had besieged the city of Jerusalem. Jeremiah received a message from God. The message said that a piece of land belonging to the family of Jeremiah was about to be sold.

The laws of the Jews concerning land are in Leviticus. If it was at all possible a family retained the land that it owned. Only in very critical situations would the family consider selling their land. They would call in even a very distant relative to take the land just to keep it in the family. This was the case in these verses.

Jeremiah's uncle, Shallum, was having a difficult time because of the seige. Land values had gone down. Nobody would buy land that was about to be occupied by another nation. Many people, however, were trying to sell their land. Remembering the Levitical law, Shallum sent his son, Hanameel to see if Jeremiah would buy the land so it would remain in the family.

Jeremiah bought the land, even though at the time it was worthless. But the act had very much significance. Jeremiah was

saying to the world that one day the land would return to the people. God would see that the conquerors were overthrown. It did not matter to Jeremiah that this would probably happen after his death.

Ezra 1:1-4 takes place after Jeremiah's death. Cyrus of Persia had conquered Babylon. "Now in the first year of Cyrus" does not mean his first year as king of Persia, but rather his first year as king of Babylon.

God stirred the heart of this Gentile king. This shows again the power of God over the Gentile world.

"The word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah" means that God would fulfill Jeremiah's prophecy that the people would return from exile in Babylon.

Verses 2-4 tells that Cyrus decreed that the Jews might begin to return to Jerusalem. Thus, God had done what he had promised his people he would do.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Ask: "Have you ever lost hope about anything?" Allow the students to discuss this at length. Let them relate from their own life experiences that showed where they lost hope. Or, they may want to tell times when it would have been easy to lose hope, but they held on. Remember that you are teaching adults. Adults may take the conversation in new directions. Your job is to stay within the subject of losing or keeping hope.

Say: "We all face very dark times in our lives. We experience illness or the death of a loved one. We may lose our jobs or our health may fail. At such times it is easy to lose hope. It is easy to forget that God will be with us and help us in all our trials and troubles. Our lesson today is about the darkest time in the history of Jerusalem when Jeremiah refused to lose hope."

Interpretation

Point to the time line in the room. Say: "The events in our lesson today take place fifty-five years apart in time. The first event happened just before Jerusalem fell to Babylon. The second event occurred when Cyrus conquered Babylon and released the Jews who have been in captive exile in Babylon. We will put in our last date and event." Write down the date, 538 B.C. and the words, "The exiles return to Jerusalem."

Continue: "The first event took place just after Habakkuk complained to the Lord." Point to that event on the time line.

Have the students open their Bibles to Jeremiah 32:6-11 and have

this Scripture read. Use your Background Study to explain to the adults about the Levitical land laws concerning keeping the land within the family.

Say: "Shallum wanted to keep the land within the family. We need to know that Jerusalem was besieged at this time. That means that the army of Babylon had encircled the city. No one could leave Jerusalem or go into it. It was evident that the city was going to fall to the mighty Babylon army. At such times, land is worth nothing to the people. Money is valuable. At times you can use the money to escape or to feed your family or many other things. Land that is about to be occupied, on the other hand, is worthless. Shallum, decided he needed the money more than he needed the land. He offered it for sale first to a member of his own family, Jeremiah."

Continue: "You might think that if Jeremiah bought the land he must be a very great fool, or at best a very poor businessman. Why would anyone want to buy land about to be taken by a foreign army? But Jeremiah was not a fool. He was a great man of God. He believed that God was going to return the city and the surrounding fields to the Jewish people at some future date. He refused to lose hope although he was in prison. Jeremiah bought the land."

Continue: "Now we will see what God does." Have the students turn to Ezra 1:14. Have that Scripture read.

Say: "God returned the city of Jerusalem to the Jews. Jeremiah's hope was fulfilled, even though the return came after Jeremiah himself had died. God was faithful to his people. Jeremiah did not lose hope, and God rewarded that faith."

Continue: "Now let us tell the story that we have been studying for the last four weeks. I will begin the story. When I stop I will call one of your names and I want you to, continue the story. When you stop, you call on another to continue the story and so on until we finish."

Start in this way: "Habakkuk was a man who was very concerned about his city. It was being ruled by very wicked men. Habakkuk wondered why God did not do something about the situation." Stop and let a student proceed with the story.

Application To Our Lives

Say: "We have seen in this history of the Jews how God rewards hope and faith in him. We need to remember their example as we face the trials and troubles of our own lives. Their example is good for us to follow."

Close the meeting with prayer.

CHAPTER FIVE

OUR NEED TO BE RECONCILED

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 1:16 - 2:11

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Romans 1:28-32; 2:1-11

MEMORY VERSE

"...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to realize that God holds each person responsible for his own sins. I want them to confess their sins to God.

TEACHING AIDS: None

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

In Romans 1:28 through 2:11 Paul, the writer, tells what happens to a man who leaves God out of his life.

Verse 28 tells us that when man fails to acknowledge God, God will give him over to himself. When man considers only himself he is ruling himself--really worshipping himself. God allows him to continue his self-worship.

In verse 29 we begin a list of the sins that fill a man who puts God out of his life. Among this long list is evil which is worse than badness. This is the desire to do harm to others.

Another sin is covetousness which is the urge within a person to disregard all others while trying to get something for oneself.

Malice is a spirit within a person which causes the person to want to hurt others. Out of his bad attitude, many other sins can grow and flourish.

Envy is the sin which causes people to resent any good thing that happens to someone else.

Deceit is the quality that makes a person accept things as true when they are not true. This attitude makes a person treat others unfairly. There are many other sins listed in these verses (29-31). God hates all sin.

Romans 2:1-11 is addressed to Jewish people. In the verses just explained, Paul was talking about the heathen or Gentile world. Now he turns his attention to his own people.

The Jews had always known that the heathen world was bad and that they would be condemned by God for their sinfulness. Never, though, did they think they were living under exactly the same condemnation. The Jews had always believed they lived with a special relationship to God. They were sure that God loved the Jews alone of all the peoples of the world.

Paul tells them that God will not always treat them with kindness, forbearance and patience. They will be called upon to answer for their sins just like the Gentiles will. They will indeed be the first to face the condemnation for their sins. They were the first to have a relationship with God. It is right that they will be the first to answer for their sins.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Ask: "Have you ever talked to people who believed they were Christians simply because their mother and father were Christians?" Let the class discuss this for a bit.

Say: "Some people believe they are Christians because they were baptized when they were babies, or because their parents were Christians, or because they are not Muslims. Our lesson today is about sin. The Jews believed they would not be condemned for their sins simply because they were Jews. They were like people who think they are Christians today who have never been saved. It is important that these people realize that each person is responsible for his own sins. God will condemn him unless he repents and runs from his sins."

Interpretation

Tell this story: "Once there was a man named Joshua. Joshua loved himself very much. He lived in a very large house. He had a car to drive. At night electricity lighted his home. Joshua liked to show off the things that he had.

Joshua also made a very great show of his Christianity. He went to the church every Sunday. He gave offerings. He helped pay to paint the church.

One thing that Joshua enjoyed was inviting people into his home to eat. He would spend the evening talking about himself and showing guests all his possessions. One day, Joshua invited some people to his house for roasted meat. They were important people in the town. When the people arrived at the house, the servants greeted them and took them to the table to eat. Joshua was nowhere to be seen. He had finally become so self-important that he wanted to show the people that he did not even have to show up to eat with his own guests."

Ask your students to open their Bibles to Romans 1:28. Tell them

to read the verses then to the end of that chapter. When they have read, ask: "Which sin did Joshua have?" The class may agree that Joshua had more than one of the sins listed. They should include arrogance as one of the sins, or perhaps they feel it is Joshua's only sin.

Ask: "What does the Bible say about someone with this sin? What will happen to him?"

Tell this story: "Martha was a member of the church. She was faithful to attend the meetings of the church. She was always there when she could get away from her market stall. The other members of the church felt strange around Martha. Most of them had been to buy something from her. They had found that Martha frequently tried to cheat them. It was never for much money, but it was cheating nevertheless.

"Sometimes the people bought goods from her and found the goods to be of bad quality when they arrived home. Other times, they would discover that she had put something else into the paper she wrapped things in instead of what they had paid for.

"The church members wondered if Martha cheated everyone like she did them. Now find Martha's sin among those listed." (The class may find several, but deceit was certainly one of Martha's sins.)

Ask one of the adults to read Romans 2:1-11. Say: "The Jewish people were much like Joshua and Martha. They were able to see the sins of the Gentile world, but they thought that they were perfect. They had a special relationship with God. They felt that this special relationship allowed them to do anything they liked and still have God's favour. Paul told them they were wrong. He said that every man is responsible for his own sins. God will judge each man individually.

"He went on to say that the Jews would be judged first since they had known Jesus first."

Application To Our Lives

Say: "We are like the Jews, too. We have sins in our lives. Romans 3:23 says that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. We may think that we are sinless, but we are wrong. We may see sin all around us, and we may be horrified by it. We fail, though, to see the pride and envy in our own lives. God tells us that we are each responsible for our sins.

"If we are Christians, we need to confess our sins before God just as the lost person must do. We need to do this every day. Sometimes we are unable to see our sins. We need to ask God to show us our sins so that we can confess them to him. First John 1:9 says that God is ready to forgive our sins whenever we ask him.

"If we allow sins to remain in our lives they separate us from true fellowship with God."

Close the meeting with prayer, asking God to reveal hidden sins to each adult in the class.

CHAPTER SIX

RECONCILED THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 5:1-21

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Romans 5:1-11

MEMORY VERSE

"But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to become reconciled with God if they have not already done so. If they are Christians I want them to be able to tell others how they may become Christians.

TEACHING AIDS: Arrange three chairs at the front of the room to be used as a role-playing area.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Romans 5:1-11 is closely connected to the last verses of chapter 4. The word "therefore" carries the reader on from a discussion of justification in chapter 4 to further discussion in chapter 5.

Verse 1 tells us that because we are justified (Justification is the act by which God brings a sinner into a state of righteousness.) we have peace. Peace means unity and harmony with God. This peace also includes harmony with the environment in which we live. It is because we have accepted God's justifying act of giving his Son, Jesus, that we are able to have this peace.

"Lord Jesus Christ" tells us who Jesus is. He is the Lord of our lives. He is in control. We give him the rule of ourselves. Jesus was an historical person whom people remembered. Paul knew so much about the Jesus. Christ tells us that it was Jesus who was the instrument (Messiah) through whom God justified mankind.

The "grace" of verse 2 is undeserved merit or favour. God loved us when we were unlovable. He saved us even though we did not deserve it. We "rejoice" or glory in our hope.

In verses 3-4, there are four words of great importance. "Sufferings" are the trials and tribulations that Christians must face in the present age so they may live in glory in the age to come. "Endurance" is the ability to withstand, to hold fast to resist. "Character" is good name; that is, being reliable, dependable, trustworthy. These three linked words produces hope. This is our hope and belief in God and his promise of eternal life.

"God's love has been poured" like rain upon dry, parched ground.

Some have called verses 6-11 a hymn of love - God's love for mankind. God loves man because God is love. It is not because man deserves to be loved.

"While we were yet helpless" means we were unable to make ourselves good. "At the right time" means that God has his own timetable. "Christ died for the ungodly" tells us that he did not die for the good or the righteous, but for those least likely to deserve such a sacrifice.

In verse 9 note that there are two times. We can be saved by his blood now, but we must be saved from his wrath at a later time.

"Reconciliation" is the act of bringing ourselves into a right relationship with God.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Ask a student to read the story about James from the student book.

Say: "This is a beautiful story of reconciliation between James and his wife. God wants us to be reconciled with our fellow men. But more than that, God wants us to be reconciled to him. Last week we studied about our need to be reconciled. Our lesson today tells us what it is like after we have been reconciled with God."

Interpretation

Ask your students to open their Bibles to Romans 5:1-11. Ask one of them to read these verses, or you may read them to the class yourself.

Say: "To understand these verses we need to understand the meaning of some words. I will write the words and the definitions on the board." (or on paper if you do not have a chalk board)

Write the following words on the board one at a time. You will write a definition after each. The words are: justification, peace, Lord, Jesus, Christ, grace, hope, rejoice, sufferings, endurance, character, love, reconciliation.

Start with the word justification. After you have written it on the board, have the adults find "justified" in the verses. Help them decide what it means. They should come up with something like: the way that God brings people to goodness.

Continue in this way with each word. Use your Background Study to help the adults make a good definition of the word. Always write the definition beside the word.

When you finish, ask if someone can reread the verses, using the definitions you have come up with instead of the words themselves.

The reading of the first verse would be something like this:

Therefore since God has brought us to goodness, we have unity and harmony with God and our surroundings through the one who is the ruler of our life, Jesus, the Messiah."

Continue this way through all the verses. This should bring a very good understanding of these verses to your students.

Say: "Do you find it amazing that God died for the sinner?" Let the adults discuss this for a few minutes.

Ask: "Who is the sinner?" Allow discussion. Agree that we are all sinners, but some of us have been saved by grace.

Ask: "Do we have any responsibility for those sinners who have not yet been reconciled to God?" (Yes, we must share the good news of Jesus Christ with all who are lost.)

Say: "Some of us share our faith effectively. Some of us do not. Usually we do not because we do not know how. We will learn how today."

Application To Our Lives

Use role-playing to teach the class members how to witness for Christ.

Ask one class member to come up and pretend to be a lost person. Be sure that you choose a Christian for this job. Have him or her sit in one chair, you sit in the other. Invite another person to come up to sit, too. He is the person who has gone with you to witness.

Use any plan that you normally use when you are winning someone to the Lord. A simple plan is called the Roman Road. You will use the Scriptures from Romans 3:23; 6:23; 5:8; 10:9-10; 10:13.

First, pretend to come to the lost person's home. Greet him in the normal way. Carry on with the usual talk waiting for an opportunity to tell him about Jesus. You might ask, "Where do you go to church?" Other questions will do as well to give you an opportunity to ask if the person has been reconciled to God through Christ. Then, go through the plan of salvation with your "lost person." If he agrees to accept Christ pray a simple prayer with him. You say a line, and he will follow after you saying the same thing in prayer. The prayer might be like this: "Lord I am a sinner. I want to be a Christian. I want to leave my sins and become new in Christ. Forgive me my sins now, Lord, as I accept Jesus as my Saviour. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

After the role-playing, invite other students up. Let them practise winning someone to the Lord. If the class is large, divide them into groups of two people each. Let them witness to each other.

Teacher, this is a very important lesson. If you do not feel confident in teaching it, ask your pastor to come in and do the role playing. It is important that it be done well.

Close the meeting with prayer, ask God to give each adult an opportunity to witness for him this week and the boldness to do it.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ALIVE IN CHRIST

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 6

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Romans 6:12-23

MEMORY VERSE

"Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

TEACHING AIM: It is important that each of my adult students know what "growing in Christ" means so each may determine his own position in relation to Christ.

TEACHING AIDS: Write on the chalk board or a large paper these words: "Free to sin, or free from sin?"

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Romans 6:12-23 is a very difficult passage of verses. Paul seems to write on one subject, then quickly change to another without finishing what he had been saying. If we remember that this is a letter, not a book written for publication, we can understand Paul's dilemma better. He is writing a letter just like we write letters, and the subjects flow into each other just as his thoughts flowed.

Verses 12-14 are part of a discussion that Paul makes on sin and law. He seems to say that a Christian is not just free from sin, but he is free from the temptation of sin as well. Rather than this, Paul is saying that sin exists, that we are all tempted by sin. We are not, though, to allow sin to become the ruler of our bodies. We must resist temptation. When verse 14 says that sin will have no dominion over a Christian because he is under grace, it simply mean that sin should not have control of that person. We changed creatures should not desire to have sin in our lives.

In verse 15, Paul asks if we should sin because we are not under the law, but under grace. Then he answers, "Absolutely not!" We have left the old life, the old sin, the old man, the old law Our faith has been placed in Jesus Christ. We have obtained grace.

In verse 17, Paul says again that we have been made free from sin. We are to be committed to a new teaching. This may refer to the fact that at the time all believers were instructed completely before they were baptized. An untaught or uninformed person could not be baptized. The new believers are told that they must now live up to their instruction before they were baptized.

Verse 18 tells us that we have been set free from sin. Again this does not mean that we will not sin, or that we are never tempted to sin. Instead we should have this as the ideal for our Christian lives. We should be slaves to goodness. To understand this, we must understand that a slave has absolutely no rights, not even to life itself. If the master commands something of the slave, the slave must do it, and he must do it at the exact moment the master wishes it done. If we are slaves to righteousness or goodness we should never have a desire for sin.

Verse 19 follows the same line of thought. We are human beings, and we understand human things. Grace is a creation of God, and is above our understanding. This is one of the reasons Paul has trouble in these verses. Once while we were still lost, we allowed our bodies to be involved in many sinful acts. Now that we are Christians, we should not be willing for our bodies to be involved in sin.

Verses 20 and 21 continue to discuss our old situation of being slaves to sin. As sinners, we reaped the harvest of our sinfulness. We did not reap a harvest of goodness. Instead our reward was death.

Verse 22 repeats that we have been set free from sin. We have become slaves to God and to his righteousness. In this new condition we are rewarded with sanctification. Sanctification means almost the same as holiness. That is, we have been set aside for God's special purpose. The end of a life of righteousness is eternal life. This is saying that there is no end to a life of righteousness.

Verse 23 tells us that when we sin, we are rewarded with death. But when we trust in the Lord Jesus we have a free gift of eternal life. We do not deserve this eternal life. God has given it to us freely.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Point to the question that you have written on the chalk board or paper. Ask: "As Christians are we free to sin, or are we free from sin?" Allow the adults to discuss this for a few minutes. Some may say that we are neither free from sin, nor are we free to sin. Agree that this is true.

Say: "Our lesson today is a very interesting one. It is about grace and the law. It is also about sin and righteousness. Before we begin, let us decide what each of these words mean."

Say: "Grace is a very special Bible word. Grace outside of the Bible means a quality of a person or thing. We can say, 'That person is very graceful.' That means she moves smoothly and well. Or, we can say, 'He speaks gracefully.' That means he speaks

well. But in the Bible, grace means something else. What does it mean?" Discuss this until you have come to a definition like "undeserved merit or favour from God."

Say: "The law as used in the Bible verses for today mean each and every of God and of man. Many times in the Bible we read of the law as being that of Old Testament. Other times, it means the law that the scribes and the Pharisees had added to God's law. But the law in these verses is all law."

Ask: "What is sin?" Allow several minutes discussion. You may wish to mention some of the sins that come to mind.

Finally, ask: "What is righteousness?" Discuss this until you have decided together that righteousness is goodness. It is the opposite of sinfulness.

Say: "Now that we have the meaning of these four words, let us look at the Scripture."

Interpretation

Say: "We are going to study each verse of our lesson together."

Have the class open their Bibles to Romans 6:12. Have someone read all the verses from 12 through 23. Then, using your Background Study and the pupils books, go back and study the passage, verse by verse. Allow the adults to express themselves about each of the verses. Recognize that these are difficult verses and that we have a difficult time understanding them.

As you study, keep saying that as Christians we should not want to sin, but we do. Do not allow any of your students to think it is possible to live a sinless life. Make sure they understand that Paul is talking about our goal, not our actual situation.

Application To Our Lives

Say: "Among several sects or branches of religion today, people hold the belief that they are sinless. They believe that others sin, but they do not. They judge others freely. I suppose we all know some of these people. They can cause everyone to feel very badly and can even cause people to turn away from the church. We need to help them understand that we have all sinned. Paul himself said he did those things he knew were not pleasing to God. We should not be troubled by these people, but we should help our weaker Christian brothers who might be troubled to understand that we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Ask if there are questions.

Close with prayer.

CHAPTER EIGHT

FREEDOM IN CHRIST

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 7:1 - 8:17

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Romans 7:14-25; 8:1-2

MEMORY VERSE

"For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God"
(Romans 8:14).

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to know that as Christians they will desire to do good, rather than to sin.

TEACHING AIDS: None

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Romans 7:14-25 is a series of verses that has caused commentators (writers who explain what Scripture means) much trouble. The difficulty comes at the point of deciding whether Paul was writing about his past pre-Christian life or his present life.

If one decides that Paul was speaking about his pre-Christian life (and many commentators do), then we must conclude that it is possible to live a sinless life. We must accept that the struggle to do right ends when we accept Christ as our Saviour. No longer are we tempted to sin. We will do only good from our conversion onward.

Since we all know that this struggle to do right is a part of our everyday Christian experience we identify closely here with Paul. Paul was not describing what used to happen to him. He was describing what was happening to him right at the moment he was writing. This, then, becomes a great comfort to us.

We are not dead to sin after we become Christians. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, a Christian church, told them they were doing some of the same things they had done before they became Christians. We continue to be subject to temptation and to sin after our conversion experiences.

We must rely upon the Spirit to keep us in the path of righteousness. It is he who will direct our ways into the ways of goodness and sinlessness. Left to ourselves we do "...not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do" (verse 19).

Let us examine these verses more closely.

Verse 14 tells us that the law is spiritual which means it is given to us by God. Paul contrasts the holy, just and good law

with his own nature which is carnal and invaded completely with sin.

In verse 15 Paul continued to explain what "sold under sin" means in verse 14 when he said he was in bondage to sin: "I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate."

Paul told of the intensity of the struggle he was undergoing in verses 16-20 when he said that he agreed with the law. He saw that it is God given, and he wanted to follow it. But, then, he seems to have said that he had no control over himself. Sin forced him to do wrong. This was Paul's acknowledgment that there are evil forces that wage war within the Christian.

The pain and turmoil of having both good and evil within him causes Paul to say in verses 21-24 that he delights in the law of the Lord. He wants to do right with his whole mind and heart. He was caught, however, in sin and did evil. The "body of death" that he wanted to be free of was his body which was dominated by sin. This is not to say that Paul hated his fleshly body at all. He hated, instead, his tendency to sin.

Paul's cry of hope rings true for us as well as he says, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" in verse 25. This is our only hope, our only way to defeat a sinful world. Jesus Christ is the only answer.

In Romans 8:1-2, Paul told of God's saving mankind through Jesus Christ. It is only through Jesus that we will rid ourselves of our body of death. If we daily walk in the Spirit we are free from the law of sin and death. Even in the life we daily live we can find freedom from the power of sin. This comes only as we seek the leadership of the Holy Spirit every day.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Say: "I want to tell you a story. Once there was a man who lived in a small village. This man was a Christian. He loved to go to church and hear the sermons preached there. He loved to sing the songs that the other Christians sang in church. He loved to read his Bible, and he loved to pray. This man loved good.

"He had a small shop in his village. He was able to earn enough for his family to live fairly well from the shop. The shop was in the middle of the town. The man could see much of what went on in the town. One thing he liked to do was to tell other people what was going on. At times, the man would add just a bit to the news he was telling. He made the stories more lively and interesting. It was not much that he added, but he knew deep within him that he was lying when he added on his bits and pieces of information. This bothered him a lot. But he was unable to stop. He was popular in the town, and he knew that much of his popularity came

from his never-ending supply of stories about the people in the town.

"This man might have been named Paul because Paul had the very same trouble that the man had. He loved the law, but he could not keep himself from sinning."

Interpretation

Ask your adult members to open their Bibles to Romans 7:14.

Say: "In our Bible verses for today, we will look into the heart of Paul. We will see how like Paul each of us is."

Recall with the adults the definitions of the four words you studied last week: grace, law, sin and righteousness. Say. "Our lesson today continues with the lesson from last week. Paul confessed that he wanted to do right but he did wrong."

Have Romans 7:14-8:2 read. Ask: "What kind of person was Paul?" Discuss this for a while. Be sure that it is mentioned that Paul was just like we are. He wanted to do what was right, but he failed.

Ask: "Why did Paul fail to do the right thing?" Discuss this. Let them find in the verses that it was sin that caused him to do wrong.

Ask: "When we become Christians do we lose our tendency to sin?" Discuss this again. Recall last week's discussion that there are denominations whose members believe they are sinless. Help your class members to see that life is a struggle to do right.

Ask: "Who helps us to do the right thing?" (the Holy Spirit)

Ask: "What is the only hope we have?" (Christ Jesus)

Ask: "How can Christ Jesus help us?" Let them discuss this for a bit, and help them conclude that we must believe on the Lord Jesus.

Application To Our Lives

Ask: "Do these verses comfort you?" Allow time for answers.

Say: "They comfort me because they tell me that I am not unlike other Christians. I want to do right, but I fail. I am like the man in the story at the beginning of the lesson. However, we are not to continue to sin just because we can be forgiven each time. We should remember the lesson from last week that we, should not increase sinning so that we can increase getting grace. God forbid! We, like Paul, know what is the holy and just way to live. We should ask the Holy Spirit to direct our lives every day. We should win over sin every time we can."

Say: "I want us to pray now. But before we pray I want us to think about the sins we have in our hearts and lives. I want us to ask God to show us any secret sins we may have. Then I want us to confess them silently to God."

Ask your members to bow their heads and give them a few minutes to pray silently, then voice a closing prayer asking God to forgive sin.

CHAPTER NINE

SECURE IN GOD'S LOVE

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 8:18-39

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Romans 8:18-39

MEMORY VERSE

"We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to realize that they can welcome struggles and hard times into their lives since these are times when God will strengthen their faith.

TEACHING AIDS: chalk board and chalk

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Romans 8:18-25 tells of the future time when the sin that dominates the world will no longer have power. The sufferings of the present time are brought by sin and are shared by nature itself.

Genesis 3:17-18 says, "...Because you ... have eaten of the tree ... cursed is the ground because of you; ... thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you."

When man fell because of sin, all of nature fell, too. These verses tell us that the whole of creation is groaning because of the sin of the world. The picture is that of a mother giving birth in great pain.

But there is a great promise in these verses. At a future time, when Christ comes in his glory, nature will be set free from the sin and evil that holds it in bondage now.

Verse 22 tells that we have the first fruits of the Spirit. These were received at Pentecost, and are received each time a person accepts Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

Verses 24 and 25 tell us that if we endure with patience we will see our hope realized. That hope is that Christ will indeed come in power and glory. That is a sure and certain hope.

Verses 26 and 27 are very precious verses that Paul has written. During the present suffering that all of us must endure we have the Spirit to help us, even in our praying. When we do not know how to pray, we can tell the Holy Spirit who will pray for us. He knows the mind of God and can make intercession for us. God, too, knows the mind of the Spirit and will understand the prayers the

Holy Spirit makes on our behalf. The Holy Spirit is God's own Spirit, one of the three persons that make up the Godhead.

Romans 8:28-39 are the wonderful verses that carry the theme of the believer's hope.

Verse 28 tells us that God works in everything for our good. Nothing that happens to us is unknown and unused by God for our good.

Verse 29 almost says that God chooses some men to be his and does not choose others. This is not true. Free will belongs to man; and God never takes it away. What is happening here is that Paul was telling us how well God knows us and how well he has planned for us. He continued this explanation in verse 30.

Verses 31 through 39 tell the reader that if we are on God's side, nothing can be successful against us. Paul recalled Abraham in verse 32 when he said that God (like Abraham) was willing to give up his only Son for us. Nothing in all of creation can separate us from the love of God. He loves us through every trial and tribulation, through every sin, through every sickness, through every temptation that we face. Nothing including angels and powers can separate us from God's love.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Ask: "Has anyone here ever suffered in any way?" Allow your members to tell of times they have suffered. They may tell of sickness, of death of a loved one, of financial loss, of trouble in the family over the ownership of land, of a house burning, of a daughter or son disappearing or many other problems. Give them plenty of time to tell of the times of hardship they have been through. You may need to start them out by telling of a particularly difficult time in your own life.

After each person who wishes to do so has shared, say: "We an go through sufferings. The bad things in our lives are caused by sin. It may not be our own sin, but it is the evil that is in the world that causes our sufferings. Today we will read words of hope that Paul wrote. In the lesson we should learn how we are to react when trials and tribulations come to us.

Interpretation

Ask the class to open their Bibles to Romans 8:18. Have verses 18:25 read aloud. Say: "Paul says that the sufferings that we are presently enduring are nothing to be compared to the glory that will be our reward. Many times when we suffer we complain like little children about what is happening to us. We cry and grumble, but God expects us to remember what our future holds. Even nature, the fields, the trees and the rivers are waiting

with eagerness for the time when Christ will come in his glory.

"Genesis 3:17-18 tell us that all of creation suffered when man fell into sin." Have these verses read. Say: "The end of the travail will come when Christ returns to the earth. This is our hope. Romans 8:25 tells us how we are to go through the trials of this life. How?" (with patience or endurance) Say: "If we suffer with endurance and patience we are behaving as mature Christians, not spiritual babies."

Have verse 26 and 27 read. Say: "These two wonderful verses tell us that the Holy Spirit helps us when we pray. How does he help?" (He interprets what we want to say to our Father.)

Ask: "Who is the Holy Spirit?" (He is the third person of the Godhead.) Say: "Since he is God, he is able to know us and God and explain our yearning and desires to God."

Have someone read verses 28-39. Say: "Here our hope is made clear. God works in everything that happens to bring good to his children. He has always known us, and he has always loved us. What can separate us from God's love?" (Let the class conclude that nothing can separate us from God's love.)

Application To Our Lives

Write on the board these words:

When trouble comes the

mature Christian baby Christian

Say: "Our lesson today has been about hope and trouble. It tells us how we are to react when trouble comes. Let us complete the sentence on the board. Spend some time letting your students name the ways that mature Christians should react, then some time listing the ways that spiritual babes react. Your list may look something like this:

When trouble comes the

mature Christian baby Christian

praises God complains

endures grumbles

hopes cries

is patient blames God

prays blames others

finds good in it quits going to church

accepts it fights

sings fusses

Let your list develop as the students make it. After you have finished, ask: "Which are you, the mature Christian, or the baby Christian? We should try to meet each trial with patience, endurance and hope. Let us pray."

CHAPTER TEN

TOGETHER UNDER GOD

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 10:1-13;11

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Romans 10:5-13; 11:33-36

MEMORY VERSE

"For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him" (Romans 10:12).

TEACHING AIM: My adult students will understand that God desires salvation for all men no matter what race, what colour, what sex, what financial position they occupy.

TEACHING AIDS: paper and pencil for each member

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Romans 10:5-13 focuses on the lordship of Christ. When Paul ascribed lordship to Jesus, he placed him on the same level as God. The idea of lordship was a common idea in the days that Paul lived. They called Caesar lord. The pagan gods were also called lord. This was the highest term given to anyone.

"Moses writes" refers to Leviticus 18:5 where Moses was actually talking about a righteousness that is based on the law. Here Paul was talking about the very opposite - a righteousness based upon faith.

"Shall live by it" might be better understood if it read "shall have life by it, or shall be saved by it."

Paul said it was not necessary for anyone to go up into heaven or descend into the grave to get salvation. That has already been done for us by Jesus himself.

All that is necessary is that a person acknowledge with his mouth that Jesus is the Lord and believe with the heart, and he will be saved. One of the first creeds was "Jesus-Lord". (A creed is a statement of one's belief.) So from the very beginning all that was necessary was to state that Jesus was the Lord. Paul said that Christians must believe with the head that Jesus has conquered death. This seems to mean more than simple belief Paul was saying that the life must bear evidence of belief. That is, the person must show by his living that he is part of the Christian community.

In verses 11-13 Paul showed that salvation is for everyone. "No one who believes in him will be put to shame." All have sinned,

and all can have salvation. Even the Gentile has the same opportunity for salvation that the Jew has. There is no difference in God's sight.

Romans 11:33-36 is like a hymn. Paul was bringing together all of his thinking about Christ that he had given in the other chapters of Romans. Perhaps at this point Paul realized that all he had said was inadequate. He wanted to say more, but realized he was unable to do so. He said that there was nothing left to do but to accept Christ and to adore him. Much of this portion was from the Old Testament and mixed Greek thought and Hebrew thought so that he could praise God in a satisfactory way.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Ask: "Who can be saved?" Let the class discuss this. Help them conclude that anyone, anywhere can be saved.

Say: "Our lesson today is about the salvation that comes to all of us when we accept Jesus."

Interpretation

Say: "Today we are going to study our lesson in a different way. I am going to give each one of you a paper and a pencil. I want you to open your Bibles to Romans 10:5-13. When you find those verses, I want you to read them to yourself. Then I want you to write down some questions about this passage. You may write as many questions as you want to."

Give the class as much time as they need. If you have those in your class who can not read nor write, have them work with someone who can read and write. They can think of questions just as easily as those who can read and write.

Move around the class and help if you need to. You might read a verse and suggest a question about it. Some questions might be: Who wrote these verses? What is meant by practising righteousness? What is righteousness based on faith? How can we be saved? Can everyone be saved?

After the questions have been written, collect them from the students. Then, read the questions and have the students search for the answer to each.

When you have completed this exercise, say: "Let us look at Leviticus 18:5 which is the verse Paul was speaking about." Have this verse read.

Say: "Moses was talking about righteousness that was based on the law. Paul was saying that righteousness based upon faith in Jesus Christ is the way to life."

Ask: "Who ascended into heaven and was brought from the dead?" (Christ). Say. "It is not necessary for a person to do unusual acts to be saved. Christ has already done all that is necessary. All that we have to do is to proclaim that he is the Lord and believe that God has raised him from the dead. That is all. God through Christ Jesus has done everything else that needs doing for us to be saved.

Ask the class to turn to Romans 11:33-36. Have these verses read. Say. "These verses completed all that Paul had been writing about the meaning of the revelation of God through Christ. He seems to have realized that his words might not have been adequate to explain the wonder of this great revelation. So Paul simply praised God and stood in awe at the wisdom and knowledge of God. This is like a hymn that Paul sang to the greatness of the glory of God."

Application To Our Lives

Say: "The song: 'His Banner Over Us Is Love' says that I love you and you love me, but the great banner over all of us is God's love. I love you because of God. You love me because of God. Nations love other nations only through God's love. It is a pity that in today's world, very little of God's love is seen. Yes, we see it around the church buildings on Sundays, but do we see it in the marketplace on Tuesday? Do we see it when the leaders of nations meet together? Who is responsible that God's love be shared with all men everywhere? It is our responsibility. We need to share God's love with everyone every chance that we get. How many times this week did you share God's love with someone else? How many people did you tell about Jesus? I pray that we will become busy in sharing God's love with everyone."

End the class meeting with prayer.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE RECONCILED LIFE

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 12

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Romans 12:1-21

MEMORY VERSE

"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21).

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to begin to use their God-given gifts for the good of the church.

TEACHING AIDS: You will need the following list of spiritual gifts: prophecy, spiritual discernment, exhortation, shepherding, faith, evangelism, apostleship, miracles, helps, mercy, giving, healing, wisdom, knowledge, teaching, leadership.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Romans 12 gives directions to the individual and to the church as a body.

Romans 12:1-2 are often quoted verses. Paul urged the Christians to present their bodies as living sacrifices to God. A living sacrifice indicates that we are to give our entire lives to God as a worship experience. Most of us think of worship as that time when we go apart from the world into the church to pray, sing and hear a sermon.

Paul, however, was saying that we must give our lives everyday to God as worship. How can we do that? We do it in the Christian sharing we do, in the love we show to others, in the care with which we deal with others.

Paul said that we are not to take on the appearance of the world. Instead we are to be changed by the constant renewing of our minds. This is done through walking with God, praying, reading the Bible, having conversation, with Christian friends and trusting God.

Romans 12:3-8 talks to the church. All of us are part of one body. In a human body, the hand is not ever angry with the neck. The foot does not think of itself as better than the nose. The whole body works together for the good of the entire body.

Each Christian has been given at least one gift by the Holy Spirit. Some have been given more than one gift. All of the gifts are to be used for the good of the church. That is the reason the gifts have been given. God makes complete, whole bodies. Churches

where there are not enough teachers, or not enough deacons, or enough servants are spiritual oddities.

Romans 12:9-21 tells us individually and as a whole (as a church) how we are to behave toward one another.

First, we must genuinely love one another. This is the difficulty in many churches today. People do not even know one another, much less do they love one another.

We are to hate what is evil. It has been said that people fear the consequences of sin but do not hate sin. When sin has the ability to shock us, then we are in a condition to hate it.

We are to outdo one another in showing honour to each other. This means putting the other person before ourselves, giving him first place.

We are to be eagerly serving at all times. Christians may burn out, but they should never rust out like an old machine left in disuse too long.

We are to be liberal in our giving, and open our houses to others. We are to rejoice with those who are rejoicing. This is a form of generosity. Many times we envy those who have cause for rejoicing and cannot rejoice with them. This is wrong. We are also to weep with those who are weeping. This is also difficult to do.

We are to leave revenge to the Lord. If someone has done evil to us, we are to repay him with good and leave the accounting to God.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Ask: "Can you think of someone in our church who has a special gift from God?"

If your class has been meeting a long time, they may begin to name many people with gifts from the Lord, including you the teacher and themselves as well. If your class is new or has only new Christians they may not be able to answer the question at all, or they may say that the pastor has a gift for preaching.

After the discussion say. "God through the Holy Spirit has given every one of us gifts, spiritual gifts. That is what our lesson is about today."

Interpretation

Have the class open their Bibles to Roman 12. Have someone read the first two verses. Say: "This chapter was written both to

individual Christians and to the body of Christians which is the church. These first two verses are to the individual. What do these verses tell us to do?" (Present your bodies as living sacrifices.)

Ask: "How can we present our bodies as living sacrifices?" Give time for discussion, and lead the class to determine that Paul means that they are to give their lives every day to his service and honour.

Ask: "What does it mean to be conformed to this world?" (It means to be just like everyone else in the world.)

Ask: "How can we be transformed by the renewing of our minds?" (by Bible study, by hearing preaching, by praying, by talking with other Christians, etc.)

Have someone read verses 3-8. Say: "A little later in this lesson we are going to spend some time on the spiritual gifts that God gives us. Just now, let us notice that Paul said that we are to use our gifts to build up the body. Every gift we have is to be used to build up the church which is the body of Christ."

Have Romans 12-9-21 read. Say: "These verses tell us how we are to behave as Christians. Name one mark of the Christian." Allow the adults to name each characteristic given in these verses (be loving, be generous, weep with the sad, pay back bad with good, etc.) Make sure they name each of the characteristics named here.

Application To Our Lives

Say: "Each one of us has a spiritual gift. I am going to read a list of the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives. This is not a complete list, but it is nearly so. It includes the gifts listed in this chapter of Romans, 1 Corinthians and Ephesians. I will give some explanation for some of the gifts. When I finish reading the list, we will go over the list again, and I want each of us to prayerfully think of people in this class or in our church who have this gift. When I go over the list the second time, I want you to say that person's name that you feel has the gift I have named."

Now, using the list in Teaching Aids, read the gifts of the Holy Spirit. For prophecy explain that this is preaching or sharing the gospel of Jesus. "Spiritual discernment" is the ability to recognize good and evil, as well as to recognize the spirits. "Exhortation" is not only to strengthen, it is to encourage as well. "Shepherding" is caring for others in ways like visiting the elderly and the sick. "Knowledge" is knowing many things. "Wisdom" is the ability to use knowledge. "Leadership" is the ability to lead groups of people.

This should be a spiritual experience for your class. Some of them may deny that they have a certain gift that others recognize

in them. Assure them that others will often recognize our gifts before we do.

Close the meeting with a prayer of thanksgiving for the gifts God has given each of you.

CHAPTER TWELVE

WALKING IN LOVE

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 14:1-15:6; 1 Corinthians 8

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Romans 14:10-23

MEMORY VERSE

"Then let us no more pass judgement on one another, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother" (Romans 14:13).

TEACHING AIM: I want to lead my students to individually decide one way they can help Christians who are weaker than they are.

TEACHING AIDS: None

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

In Romans 14:10-23 Paul talked both to the weak and the strong in the church. His plea to them was to stop judging one another.

In Romans 14:10-12, the writer spoke first to the weak brothers in the church. They had been causing trouble in the church by holding inappropriate standards of conduct. Their standards were not higher than their stronger brothers. Neither were the standards of the stronger brothers lower than those of the weak brother.

It would be well to read 1 Corinthians 8-10 to find what Paul said to the Corinthian church. There was a deep rift in the church caused by the eating of meat. All meat was first offered in pagan temples, then was brought to the market place. The strong Corinthian Christian saw nothing wrong with eating this meat. Indeed there was nothing wrong in eating the meat. There were, however, groups within the church who held to strict food laws which allowed only the eating of vegetables. This letter to the Romans was written from Corinth. Possibly, there was no great problem with eating meat in the Roman church, but Paul was influenced by the situation at Corinth.

In these verses Paul was simply telling the weaker Christian not to judge the actions of the stronger brothers. Telling their brothers how to live would not strengthen their faith.

In Romans 14:13-23 he spoke to the stronger Christian brother. He told them they were not to judge either. Neither were they to be a stumbling block or hindrance to the weak. If eating meat caused real problems for the weaker brother the strong should not eat meat.

Paul was "persuaded in the Lord Jesus" that eating meat is all right. This means that Paul was a part of the body of Christ and led by the Holy Spirit.

"Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died" means that we should not let something as small and as meaningless as the food we eat cause trouble for a weaker brother.

Verse 16 is a difficult one, but it probably means that the things you have a right to do should not become a cause of reproach for anyone.

"The kingdom of God," verse 17, means the kingly rule of God which will take place in the future.

Verse 23 told the weak brother that if he felt guilty when he did an act, then he should not do the act. This would, of course, apply to all Christians. If eating or drinking anything causes us to feel bad, then we should refrain from eating or drinking that thing.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Tell this story. "One day two friends, David and John, were in the market. Both of them were new Christians, and they were talking about the sermon the preacher had given last Sunday.

"David said, 'I really like our pastor. He really knows how to preach.'

"John agreed, and said, 'I just wish I could be more like him. He really knows about God.'

"Just at that moment, David looked down the road and saw their pastor as he went into a bar. Stunned, David was unable to say anything for a moment. John wondered what had happened to him. Then David said, 'John, Pastor just went into that bar down the road.'

"John could not believe what his friend had said. Both stood there wondering what to do. Finally, John said, 'Maybe our pastor is not the wonderful man I thought he was.'

"'Maybe he is not,' agreed David. Both men walked away with a great doubt and uncertainty in their hearts. Neither of them knew that Pastor Emmanuel had gone into the bar to pick up some papers left there by the local chief."

Say: "David and John judged their pastor when they saw him go into the bar. Our lesson today is about that kind of judgement."

Interpretation

Have the class open their Bibles to Romans 14:10-12, and have those verses read. Say: "Paul was speaking here to the weak members of the church at Rome. He was telling them not to judge their stronger brothers. In the early churches, there was some difficulty about what was proper behaviour for Christians. Many realized the new freedom they had in Christ Jesus. These were the stronger Christians. Others accepted Jesus and just added whatever new things they heard about how a Christian should behave to the old laws they were already observing. These were the weaker Christians."

Continue: "All of the meat at that time was first offered to pagan gods, then it was brought to the market place to be sold. Old Testament laws and the laws that the scribes had added forbade the eating of certain meats, especially anything that had been offered to a god. The new Christians understood that they were not to eat meat at all. When they saw other Christians eating meat, they judged them, saying they were not Christians at all."

Ask someone to read Romans 14:13-23. Say: "These verses were to the stronger Christians. Paul told them they were not to judge their weaker brothers. Neither were they to be a stumbling block or hindrance to them. He went on to tell them that food was not important enough to cause a weak brother to fall. While everything is all right to eat or drink because God created everything, the Christian should not exercise his freedom and cause someone else to wonder and doubt."

Application To Our Lives

Say: "Let us consider our story about Pastor Emmanuel and his two new church members. The pastor went into the bar to get something left there by a politician who would think nothing at all of going into a bar. The two new Christians did not think of any good reason for their pastor to go into the bar. Instead, they judged him, and their own faith was weakened."

Continue: "The pastor went into the bar without seeing the two men. Had he seen them, he might have gone to them first to explain why he was going into the bar. Certainly, he would never have gone into the bar if he had known the two men were watching him. The bar and nothing in it could harm the pastor, but it could harm his two new members."

Continue: "We are like David and John many times. We see something happen, and we judge someone without more information. We set our standards for everyone else."

"There are two lessons to learn in this chapter from Romans. First we are not to judge the actions of others. Second we are not to do anything that would cause our weaker brothers to fall."

Can you think of a time when someone judged you or another Christian wrongly? Or, perhaps you can think of a time when you judged someone only to find later you were wrong. Would you like to tell us about that time?"

Allow time for any discussion that the members might have, then ask them to think of one way they can help their weaker Christian brothers. Ask them to do whatever it is they have thought during the week to come. They may think of things like not gossiping, or watching where they go. Each one will need to think of his own plan.

Close the meeting with prayer, asking God to help the adults remember to help their weaker brothers this week.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

OUR MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 1:16; 15:7-33

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Romans 15:8-21

MEMORY VERSE

"All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18).

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to realize that they have a part in world evangelization.

TEACHING AIDS: chalk board or large paper

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Romans 15:8-13 tells us once again that Christ came for all people everywhere.

Verse 8 says that "Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness." The meaning is that Christ fulfilled all the laws of the Jews to show that he was indeed the Messiah who was promised, and thus to show that God told the truth in prophecy.

Verses 9-12 are a series of Old Testament Scriptures that proclaim that Christ came first to the Jews, but he came for the Gentiles as well. These Scriptures are: Psalms 18:49, Deuteronomy 32:43, Psalms 117:1 and Isaiah 11:1.

Verse 13 has the words "God of hope" which sets the theme for the remainder of the letter. If we have faith (in believing) we will have "joy" and "peace," and we will "abound in hope."

In verse 14 we read the words of a graceful, courteous man. Paul complimented the Romans whom he had not met on being full of goodness and knowledge. He also said they had instructed one another. Here we need to remember that the Roman church began sometime in first year after the resurrection, and that it continued for about 30 years without the leadership of an apostle.

That is, it took Peter and Paul 30 years after the resurrection to get to Rome.

By way of apology for the strong words he had written, Paul said in verse 15 that he had written boldly only "on some points." In other words he had not tried to instruct them in all matters,

only in those of which he was an expert since he was the apostle to the Gentiles.

Verse 16 tells us that Paul had been a minister in the priestly service of the gospel of God. He meant had literally given all he had for the privilege of telling the Gentile people of Jesus Christ.

In verse 17 Paul said he had reason to be proud of his work for God. This was not pride in himself. This was pride in what God had done through him.

Verses 18-21 express Paul's joy because he had been able to do the work he had done for the Gentiles.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Say: "It has been said that God has no hands except our hands. We are to do what God wants done. God has no feet except our feet. We are to go where God wants us to go. God has no voice except our voice. We are to say what he wants us to say."

Continue: "This is a wonderful thought - that we can do God's work for him. Yet how many of us are that committed to the Lord? How many of us would leave our own home, our own village to take the message of Christ to another village, another area, another country?. How many of us are attuned adequately to God to say the words that he wants us to say, instead of saying our own words? How many of us would let our hands be directed in ministering to the sick or the needy?"

Continue: "We say that we will go where God wants to send us, we will say what he directs us to say and we will do what he wants us to do. God really wants that kind of commitment from us."

Interpretation

Have your students open their Bibles to Romans 15:8. Have verses 8-13 read.

Ask: "What do you think Paul meant when he said Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness?" Let the adults discuss this and help them conclude that Christ became a Jew completely, even in the matter of ceremonial law so God would be shown to tell the truth. Say. "When God's prophets spoke on his behalf, they were saying God's words. When Jesus came, he showed that these prophets had foretold the future of the Messiah exactly!

Say. "Verses 9-12 are a series of Old Testament Scriptures that proclaim that Jesus came both for the Jews and the Gentiles. Let us read these Scriptures." Have each of the following read and

explained by the students: Psalms 18:49; Deuteronomy 32:43; Psalm 117:1 and Isaiah 11:1.

Have someone read Romans 15:13. Say. "This verse sets the theme for all the lessons in this book - hope. Our God is the God of hope. We rest in the hope that we have in him."

Have verse 14 read. Say: "Many people have thought that Paul was a cold, calculating man, but this verse shows him as a courteous and gentle one. He had never been to the Roman church, but he knew Romans were full of goodness and knowledge and able to teach each other. Perhaps Priscilla and Aquila had given him this good news about the Romans."

Say: "In verse 15 Paul apologized for the boldness he had used in writing to the Romans, but he reminded them that he had written only on some points. Most everything else needed no instruction from Paul."

Have verses 16-21 read. Say: "It sounds like Paul was boasting about his work, and he was. But he was boasting about the power of God rather than his own power. Paul gave the boundaries here for his work. No other Scripture bears this out, but not all of Paul's activities were recorded in Acts. He surely could have done what he said that he had done."

Continue: "Paul most certainly longed for the gospel to be taken to every nation so every man could hear it. That is perhaps the meaning of these verses."

Application To Our Lives

The last verse (verse 21) was a quote from Isaiah 52:15. That verse talked about the shock of the nations when the Lord appeared as a Suffering Servant. Have this verse read. Say: "Paul's desire was that everyone would see him whom they had not seen (Jesus Christ), and they would understand everything there is to know about him."

Continue: "We are Christ's ambassadors today. An ambassador does not speak his own thoughts and use his own words. He expresses the thoughts and opinions of the nation that sent them. We are to express the thoughts and do the actions and go to the places God has chosen for us."

Say: "It is very easy to be Christ's ambassador if we remember to talk about him. It is easy to tell people what Christ has done for us. We need to remember to talk about Jesus to everyone we meet, to tell them something about Jesus."

Conclude: "If we are to reconcile the world to Christ, we must be busy about it every day. To reconcile means to bring two together. When we speak Christ's name and tell what he has done for us we are bringing him and the world together. We have a part

in evangelizing the world. Our job is not done until everyone we know has heard about Jesus."

Close the meeting with prayer, asking God that your members will have the boldness of Paul in telling the world about Jesus.