

A photograph of a dirt path winding through a field of tall green grass. The path is in the center, leading from the foreground into the distance. The grass is vibrant green and appears to be blowing in the wind. The sky is a pale, clear blue. The overall mood is peaceful and serene.

The Path to Pentecost

A study in the Christian Journey



INTRODUCTION

“So teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart.” Psalm 90:12

From the very beginning Pentecost, or the Feast of First Fruits as it was first revealed, has involved counting. In Leviticus 23:15 God tells Israel to count Seven Sabbaths from the day after the Sabbath that occurs during the week of Unleavened Bread, 50 Days He tells us we are to count until we arrive at the Day of Pentecost.

I remember as a boy I would be so excited for the end of the school term, especially for the summer break. Along with all the other kids, I would literally count the days until we were released for the summer! Then when school was out, we were free at last! No more work, lessons or exams. Now a long fun-filled summer lay before us, a summer in which we could explore and play! I am sure you have similar memories like this when the days could not count down fast enough. There are also times when, with dread, we count down the days until something is due, a loan payment or a project due at work. Then there are days when we want to slow that count down. But despite our best efforts, those days seem to fly by and before we know it time is up, we have to face the thing which we feared. We have to go for that surgery, or finish that last day of work or say goodbye to a loved one. We count our days all the time and for different reasons.

So it is with this Christian walk, or at least it should be. We should be counting the days, being aware of the passage of time and what we are doing with this precious chronological currency we have been given. We don't know how much of this currency we will get to spend, so every minute, every second should be spent wisely. Sometimes we spend our time on serious things, sometimes on fun things and sometimes we waste precious time on foolish or harmful things. Each one of us must ask ourselves, “How do I spend the currency I have been given?” We each have to ask, “Where am I on this personal journey from Passover to Pentecost?”

I don't know if you have ever thought about it this way, but each one of us have had a very real and personal Passover. Our baptism is in a way a personal Passover, because it marks the moment when we passed from death to life, the point in time when we became a new creature in Christ. When we were baptized, we each declared to the world that we are sinners and only the blood of the Lamb sprinkled on the lintels of our hearts can save us from the wages of sin and death. At baptism we showed openly for all to see, a declaration that was just as public as blood on the door-posts of our home would be to the neighbors. And if that is the case, if baptism is a type of Passover, then there must also be a future Personal Pentecost out ahead of us also, our own personal day of Harvest, when God will reap the First Fruits of the work He has grown in each of us. And if all that is true, then what happens in the days during the count between Passover and Pentecost is absolutely critical.

So that brings us to another important part of what this 50-day festival countdown to Pentecost is all about. It is about the Holy Spirit. Remember in Acts 2:1-4 (NKJV) it says:

*“When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.
And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind,
and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.
Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.
And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues,
as the Spirit gave them utterance.”*

“And later Peter tells us in his great sermon:

*“...this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days,
says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh;
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams.’”*
Acts 2:16-17 (NKJV)

We are still living in those days; what happened on the Day of Pentecost is repeated over and over again with every heart turned to repentance with every life lifted up from the waters of Baptism and the laying on of hands for the receiving of the Holy Spirit. Out there in the future for each one of us is a moment when we will be changed, no longer a simple vessel containing the Spirit of God but rather a being made of the eternal Spirit of God. This is what’s ahead of us on this journey from Passover to Pentecost. So just as the scripture tells us, we need to count our days so we can apply our heart to wisdom.

Over the next six weeks this Bible study is designed to provide us each with an individual opportunity to study these scriptures independently then come together to share our insights and ideas as we count down to the Day of Pentecost. Each study focuses on a core Christian subject starting with Faith, then Hope, then Love, followed by studies on Wisdom, Patience and finally Power. But all of these subjects will be explored specifically in the light of this journey to Pentecost. We hope you will participate in this study because we feel it is more important than ever for us to encourage one another, support one another and travel on this journey from Passover to Pentecost together.



“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Hebrews 11:1

So where do we start on this journey? Well I think this journey starts at the same point it began for the disciples on the day of Jesus resurrection, which incidentally is also the same place that it started for Israel as they entered into the wilderness and also for every Christian throughout the ages. It all starts with Faith. Each one of us have to come to a moment where we really begin to live by faith. The moment when what we read in the word of God and what we have seen through the examples of other Christians, combined with the personal miracles or signs that have been evident in our own lives, gives way to real belief. The moment when it

becomes active Faith, not just a general belief that God exists or that He created the universe, or that there is some unknown mystical force at work in the world. Faith in God as a personal living being who set aside His power and eternal life to die a brutal death for you. And having died He rose again to save you and enable you to become a new type of being made in Him and for Him and no longer controlled or enslaved to sin. This understanding and belief is a vital first act of Faith. And whether that moment comes as a blinding light or a gradual realization, it is the start of Faith. But is that it? Is this all we need to have in the way of Faith? Simply believe and be saved? Or is Faith something which needs to be grown, strengthened matured, developed and even tested?

To start answering this larger question it might help if we look at all this in the reverse by learning from the mistakes of others. There isn't a greater example of what not to do in our Journey from Passover to Pentecost than that of the actions of children of Israel in the wilderness.

Read the following scriptures and after each selection list the specifics of how that example illustrated a lack of faith.

Exodus 16:1-8 “Bread from Heaven”

Exodus 17:1-7 “Water from the Rock”

Exodus 32:1-14 “The Golden Calf”

After seeing amazing miracles, the Israelites still feared they would die in the wilderness, first from hunger and second from thirst! Then they feared that they had lost their leadership when Moses was up in the mountain receiving the Law from God.

Can you relate to these fears? Have there been moments in your Christian walk when you have shown the same lack of faith? Write down what those fears were.

Question: What happened in those situations? Were your worst fears realized? What did God do despite your fears?

Read each of the following New Testament passages with an eye toward the attributes of Jesus and how He has promised to care for us and does care for us. Record your thoughts on the lines provide.

John 6:47-51

John 4:13-14

1 John 2:1-2

Jesus is the Bread from heaven. He feeds and nourishes us. He is the Water of Life; if we drink of Him out of us will spring eternal life. He is the Rock of our Salvation, struck for us. He is the intercessor who stands up for us, protects us, and makes intercession for us just as Moses did for Israel. God will not leave us without guidance. He has given us His law to guide us. He has given us His grace to forgive us. And He will come again to each of us personally and also to the whole world. He will come down from the mountain and lead us into the land of the Kingdom of God.

The author of Hebrews uses several opportunities to teach lessons about Jesus through the experiences of Israel and Moses.

Read Hebrews 3:1-6. Notice that we have to remain confident and firm in the hope that we have all the way through to the end of our Journey. In other words we must have Faith to the end.

In Hebrews 3:1 the author continues to use Israel and Moses as examples to teach us about Christ Jesus.

What is this scripture trying to get us to understand about Moses and Jesus? How are they similar and how are they different?

Moses was faithful in his own house but ultimately that was it, that was all he could do. Even though he was leading the entire nation of Israel, in the end the scripture tells us that only his own household had real Faith. The rest of the nation failed completely. The entire generation of people who had come out of Egypt died in the wilderness not having enough Faith to enter into the Promised Land. Jesus on the other hand is not only over His own house, but He is the Master Builder of the entire thing. He is building a whole new structure similar to the old but on better foundations, upon Himself. And better because He is working with each one of us, personally sculpting each one of us to fit into His house.

So, what is the House that Jesus is building?

If we are being built into a greater house than that of Moses, into the house of Christ Jesus Himself, how much more faith do we need to have than that of even Moses? The answer found in Hebrews 3:7-15

It is interesting isn't it that we have this comparison between the House Israel in the wilderness and us as the church, the House of Jesus Christ. The House of Israel hardly travelled a few days before they started to complain and whine about their circumstances and before they started to lose faith in the God who had just performed all of the miracles of their liberation!

All of these things, going astray, testing God, the hardening their hearts, are considered what according to verse 12?

How is this the same as having a lack of Faith?

Question: What examples can you think of, perhaps from your own experience, where you have departed from the living God in spite of all the blessings, all the wondrous things He has done in your life?

The writer of Hebrews continues in Hebrews 3:16-19:

16 For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? 17 Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? 19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

And as a cross reference, look at Deuteronomy 1:26–40. Record your thoughts below:

These passages equate a lack of Faith as rebelling, as sin, as a lack of obedience, not trusting God.

Question: Have you ever done this? After hearing, being convicted of sin, repenting, reaffirming your baptism at Passover only to then shortly after fall into rebellion? Have you ever rebelled against God and lost Faith? Describe what that was like and why you fell into that rebellion, why you lost Faith in that moment.

Question: Do you see any other similarities between the generation of Israel who left Egypt and the Christian’s journey towards the Kingdom of God?

There is yet another great analogy buried here and it is something easily overlooked. Along with being this great example of what not to be, an example of unbelief, the People of Israel are also an example of what Christ Jesus is doing in the lives of each one of us.

The entire generation of Israelites who left Egypt as it says in Hebrews 3:17, died in the wilderness. They didn’t get to see the Promised Land, they didn’t get to enter into the Kingdom of God. Likewise our old man or woman of sin also cannot enter into His Kingdom. Our corpses, this physical, weak and sinful body, and the old person who inhabited it, cannot enter the land, the Kingdom of God.

Remember in Deuteronomy 1:39 God says “Moreover your little ones and your children, who you say will be victims, who today have no knowledge of good and evil, they shall go in there; to them I will give it, and they shall possess it.”

We are like those born in the wilderness. When we have gone through the waters of Baptism, when we have been made into new children of God, begotten into the House of Christ Jesus, then we are in a way like that next generation of Israel.

The old man or woman who we once were is like the generation of Israel which came out of Egypt. This old man or woman, this old nature with all its longing for sin and Egypt, is dying in the wilderness. While the new child of Christ is heading to the Promised Land.

Think about this. The generation of Israel which was born in the wilderness had to live with the faithless, sinful corrupt generation of their elders who had left Egypt. In just the same way, we also have to live with the old version of ourselves as we prepare in the wilderness to enter into the Promised Land. The Apostle Paul tells us as much in 1 Corinthians 15:50-58.

Read I Corinthians 15:50-58 and record an example of where you have been steadfast and immovable in your personal Faith.

Was this act of faith in vain? Why or why not?

So our old self must die out here in the wilderness. It must grow weaker and older and be put in the grave. But our new self in Christ Jesus, the new creation in Him, members of His own house, will enter into the Promised Land, will enter the kingdom of God. But notice in verse 58, central to all this is Faith. Paul says that we need to be steadfast, immovable, and know, absolutely know, and be assured of the fact that our labor in the lord is not in vain.

Question: What are we laboring for? What is at the end of this Journey from Passover to Pentecost, for each of us personally?

Question: List other things that we are laboring for in our Christian walk

In Hebrews 4:1-16 the writer compares the word "Rest" to the promise of the Kingdom of God, to finally entering the promised land and being home.

Read Hebrews 4:1-16 and answer the following questions:

Question: What day is it that we need to stop on and not harden our hearts? What day? Is it on the Sabbath? Holy Days? On Pentecost? Certainly this scripture points to the Sabbath day, if affirms that we should observe this day. But that is not all it is talking about. There is another day another rest out ahead of us that we must have faith enough to enter into. So, what day should we not harden our hearts on, what day should he hear his voice?

Question: Why? Why do we need to still have this trust and faith? Why isn't it enough to have a one time belief? Why does Faith have to continue?

This is exactly who Jesus is. Jesus is Joshua leading us to the Promised Land but He is also our High Priest cutting out all the bad, all the old man and presenting us as a living sacrifice. Just as Hebrews tells us in chapter 4, verse 14:

"14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need"

Question: What are we holding fast to?

Question: So, then we ask what is faith? What do you say Faith is?

Faith is the ongoing commitment to follow Jesus Christ with works, obedience, trust and humility. Not acting out of fear or bitterness, not doubting His love for us but continuing in this journey with Him to the end, regardless of the obstacles and hardships or indeed the enticements of the world.

Read James 2:18–26. James shows that faith is matured by works. This is essentially what the Apostle Paul said back in 1 Corinthians 15:58 when he said, *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the **work** of the Lord, knowing that your **labor** is not in vain in the Lord.”*

Faith is labor, it is work, it is obedience, it includes belief but is not just belief and it also travels with two other companions, Hope and Love which we will look into further in lessons 2 and 3 of this study.

As you think about your faith, your personal journey with Jesus Christ as He leads you from Passover to Pentecost, from Baptism to the Kingdom of God, as you ponder this journey do you think your labor in the Lord is in vain? Or are you walking in confidence, seeing the Promised Land in the distance and with each small step seeing it get just that little bit larger, that little bit closer? If so then you can write your name with the Faithfull in Hebrews 11:32–12:2:

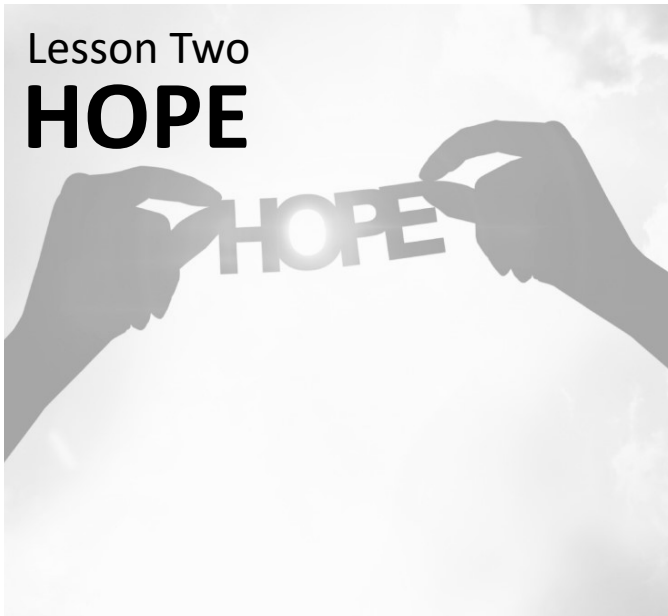
“32 And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel, and _____ and the prophets: 33 who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

35 Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. 36 Still others had trials of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.

39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, 40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.”

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Lesson Two
HOPE



“For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope.” Romans 8:24

In our first lesson, we considered the concept of faith as it relates to the Christian journey. In examining this concept, we looked at it from the backdrop of the Apostles and the children of Israel. In this second lesson, we are going to look at faith’s counterpart, hope. Like all of the concepts we are developing in this Bible study, faith and hope relate to, and build upon, one another.

As we look at hope in this lesson, we are going to ask ourselves some basic questions. Just exactly what is hope? Is there a difference between the concept of hope and faith, or are they one and the same? How does hope work to change us, our outlook on life, what

we value, and the way we live our lives? And most importantly, how do we sustain, grow and strengthen our hope? These are just a few basic questions we will seek to answer in week two on the Path to Pentecost.

What is Hope?

To start our consideration of hope, let’s answer some of the basic questions that come immediately to mind. Without looking at any passages or dictionary definitions, let’s quickly consider what first comes to mind when you consider the word *hope*. How would you define it?

After you have done this, look up the word in any available dictionary and record the definition on the lines provided:

What are some examples of how people in our contemporary culture use this term?

After you have considered this, how would you define hope from a Biblical standpoint? (Note: you may already have guessed this, but the Biblical perspective of hope and the way we use the term hope in everyday life are very different from each other).

As mentioned in the previous question, the way we use hope in everyday life and the way the term is used in the Bible are very different, almost the opposite of each other. Today, we use the term “hope” like it is a wish or desire. Using it in this way, there is uncertainty that comes with it. We may say, “I hope I get that job,” or “I hope I make it to work on time,” but we can only have varying levels of confidence in our hope. From the Biblical standpoint, hope is a surety. For example, Paul tells us in Romans 5:2, “Christians should rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.” We know that when Paul was writing here, he did not mean for us to hope in the wish, but he meant to convey to us confidence that our hope in this is sure, as he goes on to comment in subsequent verses. “Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (v. 5).

Do you find it difficult to distinguish between these two concepts of *faith* and *hope*? How would you explain the differences to a friend? Record your thoughts on the lines provided.

For some people, seeing the differences between faith and hope may be difficult because in the Bible sometimes the terms are used interchangeably. For example, in the Old Testament, the term “hope” is often used synonymously with the term “trust” (i.e., Psalms 31:24; 42:5, 11; Isaiah 8:17; Jeremiah 17:7). But we know there is a difference between the two concepts because in many places in the New Testament they are listed together but assumed to have a difference. Let us refer to the following passage which we read in our first study:

Hebrews 11:1 “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

We see from this passage, among many others, that faith and hope are different but related concepts. We *have* faith and it *gives* us hope. But still yet, what exactly is **hope**? The term is used in both verb and noun form in the New Testament. The noun form comes from the Greek word *Elpis* and it is used with the nuance of “confident expectation” or “solid assurance” (Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, 2006, William D. Mounce, p. 340).

Therefore, the term “hope” as it is used in the New Testament is a futuristic expectation of certainty rooted in God’s faithfulness in His promises. It is this hope that drives us in the here and now as we look beyond, to the future. But to have hope, one has to first have faith. Without faith, there is no hope. To put it another way, our *hope* (expectation) is only as firm as our *faith*.

Read [Hebrews 6:9-12](#) and note the phrase “full assurance of hope” in v. 11.

Based on the next few versus, [Hebrews 6:13-20](#), how can we have the full assurance of hope?

Later in this same epistle, the writer presents similar words but uses the phrase “full assurance of faith” (10:22). In v. 23 the writer says, “Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful.” In the context, back in chapter 6 of Hebrews, Abraham is cited as an example of one who laid hold of the hope set before him. In fact, Abraham was said to be one “who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations” ([Romans 4:18](#)).

Question: Read [Romans 4:18](#). How did Abraham hope against hope?

We might not have a confident expectation on the number of years we will live, or the status of our physical health, or any of the other uncertain realities that may befall us in this temporal life, but despite this, we can be sure in the promises that God has given us as heirs of the Kingdom of God.

Even though there are uncertainties in this life, our hope is provided by God through His faithfulness, and it is the anchor of our souls ([Hebrews 6:19](#)).

Question: Can you think of certain trials, hardships, or difficulties that you have experienced in this life? How was your hope in God an anchor for you?

Read the following passage and record your thoughts as to why some of the people at Thessalonica apparently did not have the full assurance of hope.

[1 Thessalonians 4:13-14](#)

Apparently, the Church at Thessalonica (to which Paul was writing) had experienced the deaths of some fellow believers.

Question: What does Paul say we can have hope in based on our faith that Jesus died and rose from the dead?

Read Romans 8:18-25 and record your thoughts as to what it means to eagerly wait in perseverance. What hope were we saved in?

Now, let us consider a few of the events discussed in our first lesson. We looked at three examples of the children of Israel lacking faith (The Bread from Heaven in Exodus 16:1-8; Water from the Rock in Exodus 17:1-7; and The Golden Calf in Exodus 32:1-14).

Despite both witnessing and experiencing the mighty wonders of God in delivering them out of Egypt, their faith was short lived. Interestingly, before these examples and right after being led across the divided Red Sea, Exodus tells us, “So the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Thus Israel saw the great work which the LORD had done in Egypt; so the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD and his servant Moses” (Exodus 14:30-31).

Despite these experiences, the children of Israel quickly waned in faith, and in turn, lost hope. What might have been a confident expectation (Biblical Hope) that God would see them through, quickly dissipated as their faith wavered.

This brings us to ask the same question in a different way. In our first lesson, we asked if you could relate to the fears of Israel in your Christian walk. In that question, you were asked to write down some of the fears you have had when you might have had a lapse in faith. Now, can you write down how such a lack of faith changed the way you viewed the future? Or to ask it another way, did your lack of faith extinguish your hope?

In all three examples of Israel’s lack of faith, it drove their hope away and changed their outlook and in turn, their actions.

Read the following Scriptures and record the details regarding God’s assurances to the children of Israel. What was Israel’s response when it came time for them to possess the land?

Exodus 23:20-33

Numbers 13:1-33

Numbers 14:1-4

How Does Hope Change Us?

We have established that hope is the confident expectation we have based on our faith. We now need to ask the question, in what ways does hope change us?

Hope, working through faith, transforms us by changing how we look at ourselves and this life, what we value, and what we do with our time.

In our previous lesson on faith, we talked about how Jesus is not just building a new house, but one where He Himself is both the Master Builder and its Foundation. As Christians, we no longer see ourselves as mere citizens of this world, but citizens of the Kingdom that God is building. As Paul tells us in Philippians 3:19-21, we no longer set our minds on the things of this earth, but our focus has become fixed on Jesus and His coming. Read the following passage and consider how our Christian hope changes our perspective about this life we live today.

Philippians 3:17-21

¹⁷ Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. ¹⁸ For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ: ¹⁹ whose end *is* destruction, whose god *is* their belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame—who

set their mind on earthly things. ²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”

Question: Can you think of ways in which maybe you had set your minds on earthly things before you believed?

Question: In what ways does the world promote this earthly focus? Whether it be in safety, wisdom, or wealth? As a cross reference, consider Psalm 33:16-17; Psalm 146:3-7; Proverbs 3:5-6; and 1 Timothy 6:17.

In the previous passage (Philippians 3:20), Paul says “we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” This is the epitome of the Christian hope and is what sustains us in the face of every trial and tribulation that we may go through in this life. It also drives us to see our citizenship with God as preeminent over our earthly citizenship. Whether we are a rice farmer in India, or a computer programmer living in middle America, we all now identify first and foremost in Christ. And He is Who we put our trust in, and where our hope lies. As Paul tells us in Colossians 3:3, “For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”

But becoming a follower of Christ is not just a one-time act, as we highlighted in our last lesson. It is a journey. And just as the Israelites struggled on their journey, our new-self will struggle with our old man, our wilderness-self. We may have lapses in faith. We may experience times when we do not live with a heavenly focus. We may regress back into a mentality set on building up treasures on earth. Let’s face it, the fact that Paul and other writers of the New Testament repeatedly reminded believers of this trap demonstrates that it is to be an ongoing temptation for Christians.

Question: Have you as a believer experienced this? If so, elaborate below. How do you think understanding our true identity can help us get back on the right track?

If we have faith in the true realities that God has shown to us through the Scriptures (Jesus Christ dead and raised as a sacrifice for our sins, our adoption as children of God through Christ into the new house that Christ is building, and an eternal inheritance in God’s Kingdom), then focusing our treasures on earth demonstrates not just a lack of *faith*, but a lack of *hope*. The things of this world cannot be compared to the riches in Christ, for such a comparison is literally synonymous with comparing the life of bondage and oppression in Egypt with life in the milk and honey rich Promised Land. A truly illogical comparison.

In contrast to the old life, as we discussed in our previous lesson, the Christian is to see himself or herself in light of the new creation that they have become (2 Corinthians 5:17-19). We now have a new outlook and heritage, not one from this world, but one modeled after Christ.

1 Peter 2:9-12: ⁹“But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ who once *were* not a people but *are* now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. ¹¹ Beloved, I beg *you* as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, ¹² having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your* good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.”

Question: What terms does Peter use to describe Christians as a whole?

Question: When you first believed, became baptized and accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, how did you experience a change in the way you saw your life? Describe how your focus changed.

It is interesting that many of the terms used by Peter to describe Christians are the same terms applied to the children of Israel (Exodus 19:5-6). New Testament commentator Craig Keener notes that on the Passover, Jewish people in New Testament times described the deliverance from Egypt as a call out of darkness into great light (IVP New Testament Background Commentary, 1993, 712). See also Isaiah 60:21; 61:3; and Jeremiah 13:11 for additional references.

The terms “sojourners” and “pilgrims” show us that we as Christians are to have a pilgrimage mindset. As the author of Hebrews reminds us, “For we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come” (Hebrews 13:14).

Question: What comparisons can you make between the children of Israel’s new outlook on life (or what it should have been) and the Christian outlook on life as new believers come out of darkness?

I think we have several great examples of how faith produced a hope that demonstrated a change in the outlook on life. For now, we will consider just one.

Read the following passage and focus on how hope in Christ moved Paul to have this particular outlook on his life.

Acts 20:17-24

How Do We Keep Our Hope?

So, the question we must now ask is how do we strengthen, hold onto, and water this hope? Of course, answering these questions fully would take several lessons, but here we will just consider a couple, and allow us as individuals to reflect on what has helped us sustain our hope.

Read Romans 15:4. What does Paul say helps to strengthen our hope? Think back to the people in Thessalonica in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14. Did their hope suffer from a lack of knowledge?

Knowing God's Word is the way in which we become aware of not only what God expects of us, but of the certainty of His promises. We know from warnings throughout the New Testament epistles, ignorance of God's Word can harm our understanding and in turn, send us down the wrong track. But it is not just intellectual knowledge that we must have. Our knowledge must be coupled with a strong, Spirit-led life.

In Romans 15:13, Paul writes, "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

Question: What has helped strengthen your hope in this Christian journey? How does the Holy Spirit give you peace and joy and an unwavering hope?

This brings us full circle back to the apostles at that very day that Jesus was taken into heaven. Remember the timing, just a few days before Pentecost. In the passage below, summarize the question that the apostles asked and Jesus' response.

Acts 1:4-8

The question the apostles asked is interesting. Essentially, Jesus' response was, "There is still work to be done." So often throughout recent Christian history, focus has been centered around when Jesus will return, "prediction addiction" as it has sometimes been called. None of us know the answer to this. Still yet, we are to live as if we are entering the Promised Land (Kingdom of God) today. And the answer to the apostle's question still applies to us today. We have work to do. During this time, the apostles were waiting on the promise (Holy Spirit) that Jesus assured them would come. There is no doubt that even if the apostles did not fully understand how this would happen, they had a certain expectation (Biblical Hope) that it would.

In many ways, this journey to Pentecost is the paradigm for the Christian journey. We are waiting on the promise, that is, Christ's return, and the full reality of Christ's Kingdom to be established on earth. And just like the apostles, we have a certain expectation that God's promises will come to pass, in God's timing. But this wait is an *active wait*, not a passive one. We are to be active in pursuing our call and showing our hope to be true in the life that we live.

As Peter tells us in 1 Peter 1:13 (New English Translation), "Therefore, gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."



“But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love.”

I Corinthians 13:13

Bible studies in faith and hope have drawn us now to this vital Bible study of LOVE. It was the love of the Father who sent His son to die for the sins of the whole world. It is His command to love our neighbor as ourselves. In a negative sense it is the love of the world that drives us *away* from the love of God. This scriptural study of love will help us to evaluate our love of the Father, our love of Jesus, our love of our brethren, and our love of neighbor as our self.

How Do We Love God?

Let’s begin with Deuteronomy 6:4 “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”

Jesus quotes the same passage in Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:29-30 and Luke 10:27. Note Jesus said that on these two commandments, the love of God and the love of our neighbor, hang all the law and the prophets.

How do we love God with all our heart?

How do we love God with all our soul?

How do we love God with all our might?

(Note: Good sources for answers to these questions are found in Cruden's Complete Concordance, Strong's Concordance or e-sword on the computer.)

Read Mark 12:31 and Luke 10:30-36. Are there other ways to show love to our neighbor? Record your thoughts on the lines provided.

If we love God we must also do what? (See Deut. 5:6, Deut. 30:16, and John 14:15)

We are warned in the scripture that the carnal mind is enmity against God and that the lust of the flesh manifests itself in adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. We are warned to love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. And further, we are admonished that the Prince of the Power of the Air is always broadcasting his evil will. Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour.

Read the following references and record what each one says we are to do to win against the forces of evil.

John 15:1-17

Romans 8:4-13

John 3:15-17

Pick one or two of those characteristics and explain how love would work to build that particular character trait in a person. For example, how does love keep us from being puffed up?

Read 1 John 4:7-14. In verse 8, John writes “He that loves not knows not God; for God is love.” Verses 7-14 expound the heart and core of what love is. The following questions can be answered mostly from verses 7-14.

In verse 8 “God is love.” How is this expounded in context of these verses?

Why is love made perfect (mature) so that we can have boldness in the day of judgment?

How does love cast out fear?

Who is my brother?

Would this include our spouses?

The next series of questions are from Ephesians 5:21-33 and Ephesians 6:1-4. These verses concern love expressed in the family.

What does the Bible say about the husband's love for his wife?

What about the wife's love for her husband? How is it expressed?

What about our children? How is our love expressed for them and how can they show us love?

In conclusion, on this 28th day as we count to Pentecost, we are reminded that the Fruit of the Spirit (that gift given at baptism) is the love of God which has been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. We are also reminded that the love of God is expressed by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the remission of our sins and the fulfillment of our destiny in the Kingdom of God.

How does having the gift of the Holy Spirit affect your ability to demonstrate love?



“But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

James 1:4

Merriam Webster defines patience as:

- 1: bearing pains or trials calmly or without complaint
- 2: manifesting forbearance under provocation or strain
- 3: not hasty or impetuous
- 4: steadfast despite opposition, difficulty, or adversity

Our patience is tested every day. On the highway during traffic jams or vehicle wrecks. We have constant road construction; long lines in stores; in movie theaters, and in restaurants. Our modern society is tied to computers and cell phones which can be very frustrating and can try our patience.

So what is a Christian to do? What wisdom does the Bible impart? How does the Spirit help?

In the opening verse in James 1:4 how does patience help us to be perfect?

Does this verse imply resurrection perfection or something else?

We have just completed the studies of Faith, Hope and Love. How does faith build patience? (see James 1:3 and Hebrews 6:12)

How does hope build patience? (Romans 5:4, Romans 8:25 and Romans 15:4)

Longsuffering is the translation of the Greek word *makrothumia*

Thayer Definition:

- 1) patience, endurance, constancy, steadfastness, perseverance
- 2) patience, forbearance, longsuffering, slowness in avenging wrongs

Patience is the translation for the Greek *hupomonē*

Thayer Definition:

- 1) steadfastness, constancy, endurance
 - 1a) in the NT the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings
 - 1b) patiently, and steadfastly
- 2) a patient, steadfast waiting for
- 3) a patient enduring, sustaining, perseverance

Two Greek words with meanings very similar.

Look up Galatians 5:22. Why is longsuffering, or *makrothumiaa*, a fruit of the Spirit instead of patience, or *hupomonē*?

An answer might be found in the Old Testament in Exodus 34:6.

What does God tell Moses about His character traits? (see also Psalms 86:15)

Read 2 Peter 3:9. “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

How does this inform our understanding with regard to the wrath of God? What explanation is there for why His wrath is not immediately rained down when mankind sins? (See Romans 2:4 and Romans 9:21-23.)

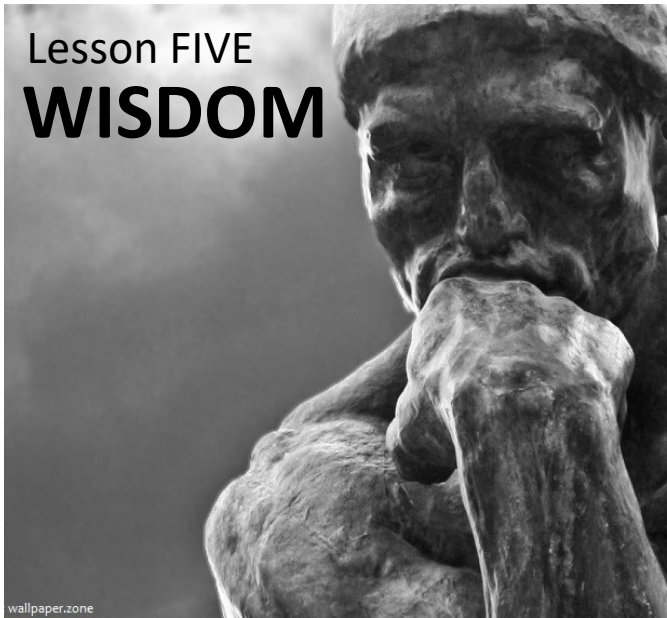
Read Colossians 1:10-12, Colossians 3:10-13 and Ephesians 4:1-3. How do we walk worthy of the Lord?

Both *patience* and *longsuffering* are two Godly characteristics that God gives the new man through the Holy Spirit. As we approach Pentecost, let us all take inventory of the fruit being produced.

Are we lacking in patience or longsuffering? Then we need to ask God to fill us so that we continue to grow in the stature and fullness of Jesus Christ.

Lesson FIVE

WISDOM



“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever.”

Psalm 111:10 (NKJV)

The scripture above is probably quite familiar to you; I remember learning it as a young man and thinking that was all I needed to do. Fear God and then I will be wise. But the older I have become, the more I realize that I am a long way from being wise.

I have much more to learn than I ever thought about. It is true, the fear of the Lord, respecting and honoring Him, is the beginning of wisdom, but it is not the end. It is just the first step in wisdom. There is much

more to it, more than just fear and respect and more than just following His commandments. Indeed, following His commandments, as the scripture says, is also just the start of learning; it is not all of it.

God has more wisdom and more knowledge for us to learn, more to bring into this new creature that He is creating in us. As we journey from Passover to Pentecost, maturing from that redemption seedling to the first fruit harvest of our new life in Christ Jesus, we continue to grow in wisdom. But let us start from the beginning, what is wisdom?

In the space below, write down how you would define wisdom:

A dictionary definition of Wisdom is:

“The quality or state of being wise; knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action; sagacity, discernment, or insight.”

I think that wisdom to a Christian, however, is different. Of course people can be wise in many different spheres of life, in the workplace, in technology, in politics and as we say “in the ways of the world” good or bad. But for the Christian, true wisdom is not the same as the world’s view. In many ways, for the Christian, Wisdom could be defined as “the application of sound judgement made in conjunction with Godly knowledge through the leading and directing of the Holy Spirit.”

Godly wisdom is different than the wisdom of the world because it has this additional component, the Holy Spirit. And because of this Spirit, Godly wisdom is a powerful tool that is available to us in every sphere of life, in our business decisions, our work decisions, our financial decisions, our relationships and even in the public sphere where it is perhaps needed the most. But this wisdom is not of our own cunning. It has to be founded in Biblical knowledge and most critically led by the Holy Spirit. Without this last vital element, the Spirit of God in us, our biblical understanding is just academic knowledge, and our wisdom will just be of our own imagination and experience.

Please read 1 Corinthians 2:1–5 (NKJV)

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. 3 I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. 4 And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”

Question: What wisdom did Paul want to avoid when preaching to the Corinthians and why?

In this passage the word Wisdom is the Greek word “Sophia” (σοφία) which means *skill*, and is sometimes translated *cleverness*. Thinking about this wisdom as a skill, Paul was trying to make sure that in his preaching he was not just being persuasive, skillful and clever with his arguments but that the wisdom of his arguments was built upon the power of God.

Question: What is the power that Paul is referring to and how does this power help in our faith and in our wisdom?

If we were to stop here we might think that we are not to use reason and knowledge in our Christian faith, but is that what Paul is telling us?

Paul continues in 1 Corinthians 2:6–8 (NKJV)

“6 However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. 7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, 8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

Have you ever really thought about this? We have a hidden knowledge, a hidden wisdom. We have been privileged to understand a mystery that is otherwise hidden from the world. It is interesting that this concept has been used countless times in books and movies in our culture. This concept that there is a hidden, mysterious truth and wisdom out there in the world and only those with a special power can see and understand it. Movies such as the “Matrix” and “Dr. Strange,” as well as “The Lord of The Rings” and “The Chronicles of Narnia” and so many others all allude to this theme. Likewise, ancient stories from the Greeks and Romans tell of a hidden, mysterious wisdom that if accessed will grant us incredible power and ability. It is almost as though there is a rumor going around in human consciousness and history that there is something more at work in the world than what we see but that it is just out of reach.

Question: What do you think Paul is referring to in verse 7? What is the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory?

Question: Who do you think Paul was referring to as the rulers of this age and why?

“9 But as it is written:

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,

Nor have entered into the heart of man

The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

13 These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15 But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. 16 For “who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?” But we have the mind of Christ.”

Question: What does the Spirit of God teach us?

Question: Can you give an example of how the Spirit of God has taught you and what that lesson was?

In 1 Corinthians 3 Paul chides the church at Corinth for being the opposite of wise, they are instead acting quite foolishly. Paul goes so far as to say they are behaving carnally, having strife, envy, and divisions. He accuses them of using worldly wisdom in boasting of their so called credentials.

Please read chapter 1 Corinthians 3 and answer the following questions:

Question: How were the Corinthians being foolish?

Question: In contrast, what was the Godly Wisdom that Paul was imparting?

Question: How did Paul describe the Church?

Paul then pivots and asks the Corinthians and us to do something rather strange. He asks us to become fools. He says in 1 Corinthians 3:18–23 (NKJV)

“18 Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. 19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, “He catches the wise in their own craftiness”; 20 and again, “The LORD knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.” 21 Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things are yours: 22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come—all are yours. 23 And you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.”

This passage also reflects what Paul said earlier in his letter in 1 Corinthians 1:18–31 (NKJV) Please read this passage and answer the following questions:

Question: What does Paul consider the wisdom of this world?

Question: Thinking about the world we live in today, what examples can you think of that exemplify the foolishness of the so called “wisdom” of this world?

Question: What does the world think is “foolish” about the Christian faith?

Question: How is the faith we have not foolish?

Question: Thinking about Paul’s statement regarding “the message of the cross” or “Stauros” (meaning stake in the Greek) how is it the power of God? (Refer to I Corinthians 1:18.)

Question: What other values of the Christian way of life does the world view as foolish?

At the beginning of this Bible Study Series we started with a scripture from Psalm 90:12, the Psalmist asks God to “...teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.” This is so very relevant as we think about our life being this journey that we are on to a future day of Pentecost. Are we counting these days, and more importantly are we gaining a wise heart? And what kind of wisdom is in there? Is it a heart full of God’s wisdom or the wisdom of the age and this world?

Question: Do you stop and consider the power of God’s Spirit in your decision making?

Question: How can you improve your own decision making? How can Christians be more deliberate about using the wisdom of God through the power of His Spirit when dealing with the challenges of life?

On the last page, take some time to pray and search the scriptures on this concept of Godly wisdom. In the space provided, write out a favorite scripture or most powerful scripture to you on God’s Wisdom. Please consider sharing this scripture aloud during the next Bible study review on Sabbath.



“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Acts 1:8

Introduction

Power. It is something that we as a society are drawn to. We marvel (no pun intended) at the superheroes, whether it be Superman, Spiderman, Captain America or any other superhero in our pop culture. All of them have one thing in common, they possess some sort of power that defies human nature and the natural laws of the universe.

There is something about our human nature that draws us to this idea of power. We see this in politics, sports, business, and unfortunately sometimes even within church leadership. From the world’s perspective, power is to be sought after to gain authority, wealth, fame, and to accumulate, oftentimes for a person’s own selfish indulgences. But the Bible speaks of power in a different way, that is, the power to be transformed, to overcome, and to be bold in God’s work.

As we have reviewed in our previous studies, God demonstrated His miraculous power in the midst of both the children of Israel as well of the disciples of Jesus. This display of power would spread far and wide, so much so that even the nations in the land of Canaan would hear about and fear the Israelites on behalf of Israel’s God ([Joshua 2:9-11](#)).

God’s power stands in contrast to the traditional way we think of power from the world’s perspective. First, His power demonstrates the frailty of mankind. No matter how much we as a human race successfully accomplish, such things are nothing compared to the power of God. In fact, one of the first acts of becoming a follower of God is coming to the realization that our own finite nature, our weaknesses, and our inability to be self-sufficient, contribute to our failure to live up to the standards that God has set.

Secondly, God chooses to reveal His power through the most unlikely of places from the world’s perspective. As we discovered in our previous study, the wisdom of this world is often in contrast to the wisdom of God. Likewise, God has chosen to reveal His power in ways that would seem to be the opposite of powerful, at least according to the way we have been trained to think about power.

Read [1 Corinthians 1:26-29](#). On the lines below, discuss your thoughts regarding how the choice of the Children of Israel and the 12 disciples of Jesus fits into what Paul says in these verses. How do you feel about what this scripture might say of you personally?

The Power to Do God's Work

In [Acts 1:6-8](#), Jesus gave the apostles some very important instructions:

"4 And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; 5 for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." 6 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. 8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Right here, Jesus is associating the power which the apostles would receive with that of the Holy Spirit. The actual day of Pentecost in the next chapter demonstrates what this power of the Holy Spirit would look like. But notice what activity Jesus mentions this idea of power with, "and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" ([Acts 1:8](#)). One of the key ideas associated with this power of God's Spirit is being a witness. In the context of Acts and the apostles, they were to be witnesses to Jesus' teachings, and most importantly, that these teachings had been vindicated through Him dying and rising from the grave (the importance of this is highlighted in [Acts 1:21-22](#)). But Jesus did not leave the apostles, and us for that matter, without a pattern for being a witness. In many ways, Jesus was the ultimate witness.

Read [John 14:1-11](#). Record your reflections on the lines below. Who does Jesus say He testified of?

Let us consider some of the works that Jesus performs, which no doubt He alludes to in the passage we just looked at above in John 14. As you read, note the work that Jesus performs and how it demonstrates His authority. Also take note on how people reacted to witnessing these works.

Authority over unclean spirits: [Luke 4:31-37](#).

Authority over the natural elements: [Matthew 8:23-27](#).

Authority over illness and death: Matthew 8:18-31.

Turning our attention back to John 14, (vv. 1-11), Jesus concluded His discussion on His testifying of the Father by saying, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father” (John 14:12).

What is striking about this is what takes place very shortly afterward. At Jesus’ moment of being seized by the band of soldiers and officers sent by the chief priests and the Pharisees, all of His disciples abandoned Him (See Mark 14:50; Matt. 26:56). In the recording of this event, Jesus says something very interesting when He tells those seizing him, “But this is your hour, and the power of darkness” (Luke 22:53). At this moment, the power of darkness was too much for the disciples to handle. Despite repeated warnings (Matthew 16:21, 20:17-19; John 13:21-29) and even Peter getting rebuked for rejecting this warning (Matthew 16:22-23), the disciples did not comprehend it. In one way, the culmination of this abandonment came in Luke 22:54-62.

Read these passages and record your reflections. Can you relate to Peter in his moment of weakness? What experiences on your journey with Christ might feel similar?

In many ways, all of us were present with Peter in that moment of time. Of course, not literally, but metaphorically. All humans, both in the present and in the past, have at one time or another “denied” knowing or having part with Jesus. We may not have done this in a literal, verbal way like Peter did, but we have with our actions, our thoughts, our motivations, our hearts. At some point, we have missed the mark and denied and betrayed Jesus. In Peter’s case, it was driven by fear. Fear of being associated with Jesus and in turn, being arrested, beaten, and brought to trial like Jesus was.

Question: Can you think of ways you might have denied Jesus? What do you think motivated this? Elaborate below.

By now, you may be saying to yourself, “I thought this Bible study was about the Holy Spirit and the power that it gives us?” But to fully understand this power, it is necessary to look at the before, not just the after, of the Spirit’s transformation. And this transformation takes place on the Day of Pentecost.

Read Acts 2 and record your thoughts. Pay special attention to the boldness of Peter. What were the results of the Spirit’s coming?

The next chapter gets even more intense. Just as Jesus said, (paraphrased) “greater works than these you who believe in Me will do” (John 14:12).

In Acts 3-4, we read about a powerful story of God’s Spirit at work. You may choose to read through these two chapters to get the full feel for what takes place. To summarize, Peter and John enter the temple at the mid-day hour of prayer and encounter a man who was paralyzed from birth. Being at this time of day, there were likely numerous people present in the temple, which is alluded to in the context of the story (Acts 4:4).

Read Acts 3:1-10 and record your reflections. How does this event compare with the works that Jesus did? Note the astonishment of the people.

Read Acts 3:11-26. Considering the context, how were the words that Peter spoke bold?

Soon after this, both Peter and John were taken into custody for the words that they spoke. The next day, they were plainly asked “By what power or by what name have you done this?” (Acts 4:7).

Question: What was their response? (Acts 4:8-12).

Question: What was the response of the high priests, rulers, and scribes? (Acts 4:13-22).

This is a remarkable story of the power of God’s Spirit and His ability to both give us boldness and to transform us. Think back to that scared and fearful Peter who we reviewed during Jesus’ arrest and trial. Knowing full well the possible consequences of their words and actions, both Peter and John stood firm in the boldness that the Spirit gave them to fulfill what Jesus called them to do. They proclaimed the name of Jesus, even in the midst of the same people who put Jesus to death.

Question: Can you elaborate on experiences you have had where the Holy Spirit gave you boldness in the face of potentially negative consequences?

Reflecting back on Jesus’ words to those who were seizing Him when He was arrested, Jesus said, “But this is your hour, and the power of darkness” (Luke 22:53). Despite the power of darkness being defeated by the work of God through Christ, it is still free to rule over the world at this time. Consider Paul’s words when he says, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12).

Paul goes on to exhort his readers to be prepared for their battles against these spiritual powers of darkness and says, “*Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand*” (Ephesians 6:13).

Read Ephesians 6:14-17. Out of all of the defensive weapons, note the only offensive weapon Paul cites. What weapon is this likened to?

Question: How does the Sword of the Spirit help us combat the fiery darts thrown our way? You may want to think back to our previous lesson on Wisdom.

The Spirit does not just empower us to be bold witnesses, but to overcome the flesh (Galatians 5:16-26), to be sanctified (Romans 15:16; 1 Peter 1:2), and to be children of God (Romans 8:16). The Spirit of God is the lynchpin of the Christian journey. It is what empowers us to live the Christian life in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Consider the words of the apostle Paul in Romans 8:5-9. *“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. 8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.”* This is a marvelous gift that God has given us. But we have been warned, it is possible to resist God’s Spirit.

Question: Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22. What do you think Paul means by “Quench the Spirit?”

Question: In what ways do you think you might have ever resisted the Holy Spirit?

Conclusion

In this study, we have looked at the topics of **faith, hope, love, patience, wisdom**, and now the **power** of the Holy Spirit. All of those previous topics that we have covered have one thing in common: they are only possible with God’s Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit of God in us, we cannot have faith or hope. This Spirit is sometimes described as the earnest, the down payment of a more full gift in the future. And it is also a promissory note that we can rest our faith on, and hope in even when reason and feelings fail us.

Likewise love and patience are only fully realized with the strength that comes from the Holy Spirit and then true wisdom and power that can only be revealed by this incredible gift that we have been given in Christ Jesus. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in us that forms the foundation of the new creature in Christ and

then sustains this fragile life in the womb of this earthly tabernacle.

It is our hope that this simple study will be just a start of a journey of deeper understanding and discovery of what God is doing within each one of us. And perhaps it might help us all to gain greater faith and hope in the future that God will bring to this earth, including greater levels of patience and love that we must have towards all of His children and the wisdom to use the power of God with grace and mercy.

Perhaps we can at last see the words of scripture made more full and more pronounced than it was when it was first written in Acts 2:1-4. *“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.”*

In concluding this study, please take a moment to think about the journey, your personal path from Passover to Pentecost. As you think about those topics we have studied, ask yourself, how much do you rely on God’s Spirit? Respond to these final questions to help you examine these thoughts.

Question: What are some areas in your life where you could attempt to “walk by the Spirit” more?

Question: Considering the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), which of these do you find flourishing in your own life?
