

YOUTH PRAYS-GOD ANSWERS!

Glen A. Coon

Name: _____

Date: _____

Lesson 19:

This Is the Life!

PASTOR COON, would you like to go with me Thursday evening to visit a young couple, Sam and Sadie West, who are studying the Bible-in-Hand course?" asked Jim Hogan.

"I'll be glad to," I answered, happy to be of service.

"That's great!" Jim responded. "They are on the verge of making a decision to keep the Sabbath but want a little more information. There's something else I ought to tell you, though, before you agree for sure."

"What's that?" I asked, now a bit curious.

"Well, two ministers of another church are coming over the same evening. These ministers want to show Sam and Sadie West how dangerous the teaching of our church is."

I smiled as I said, "That doesn't change my decision one bit. I'll be happy to go."

On the appointed night, Jim and I made our way to the modest cottage where Sam and Sadie West lived. We were invited in and with real warmth made to feel right at home.

It was not long before another knock was heard at the door, and in walked the two fine Christian pastor's, whom I will call Jones and Smith. Pastor Jones was the spokesman almost from the first.

Scarcely were these good pastors seated before Sam started the conversation with a very direct question: "Pastor Jones, is the seventh day the Bible Sabbath or isn't it?"

It was evident that Pastor Jones had not planned on such a straightforward question at the very beginning of the confrontation. Undoubtedly he had had his own plan for the format of conversation that evening. But since Sam had asked the question, some kind of answer must be given.

The pastor replied, "Sam, the Sabbath is really one of the minor errors taught by Sabbath-keepers. This evening we want to expose some of their more deadly errors."

Then turning to me, this earnest pastor said, "Do you mind if I ask you a personal question?"

"Not at all," I replied as I smiled. "Go right ahead." I did not know what he might ask, but I remembered the text that says, "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." 1 Peter 3:15.

I awaited the question. Pastor Jones fastened his eyes on me, closed them slightly, and with an intensely earnest expression asked, "Are you saved?"

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How happy I was that he had asked that question, for that very morning I had been reading my Bible and had gone over some texts that gave me an unquestioned reassurance of the Father's will for me with regard to this very question. Now all I had to do was to share the experience of the morning. With a face that was radiant, I replied with a resounding, "Yes, sir."

The look on the pastor's face indicated that I had not given the answer he had expected. Undoubtedly he had thought I would beat around the bush and try to qualify an answer.

Pastor Jones was visibly shaken and mumbled a few words and ended by saying, "You are the first member of your church I have ever met who has said he was saved."

While Pastor Jones was searching for words to carry on the conversation, I felt impressed by the Holy Spirit to further develop my affirmative answer.

"I would like to explain why I can say, 'I am saved.' This morning when I awakened, I turned to a promise of the Bible which says, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' 1 John 1:9. I asked God to forgive my sins this morning. I then believed He had forgiven me just as He promised. Then I returned thanks that He had forgiven me. Then I took the promise just across the page, recorded in 1 John 2:25 which reads like this: 'And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.'

"I asked God this very morning to give me eternal life, just as He here promises. I told Him I believed He was giving eternal life to me; and then I claimed eternal life by returning thanks that I had received eternal life, just as He promised."

Pastor Jones was listening. So were Sam and Sadie and the other pastor. I continued. "This morning I also claimed the Bible promise of John 1:12 which says: 'But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.'

"I asked God to make me His son again for today. I believed He was doing it. I claimed it, and returned thanks that I had received continued sonship.

"Then I took another promise, this very morning. It was the promise of John 3:16 which promises everlasting life. Again I asked, believed, and 'claimed by returning thanks that I had received everlasting life. This is why I can answer, with no doubt, that I am saved-right now!"

Pastor Jones did not say a word. He just sat there in deep thought as I continued.

"Now we do not go around bragging, 'I am saved.' But we do like to declare the fact that 'Christ is my Saviour.' You see, the first expression puts self in the center. The latter points to our Lord, and makes Him the center."

I developed the thought a little more fully, all the while rejoicing that, "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12. I was also conscious of the text that says, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." 1 Corinthians 10:12.

Perhaps fifteen minutes passed before the good pastor ventured another question.

He asked, "As you sit here in this home tonight, and think of a period of time, let's say ten years from now, can you, tonight, as you sit here, tell me that ten years from now you will be saved?"

"No, of course not," I replied, "but I can say this: If ten years from now I claim the same promises of my Lord which I claimed this morning, then I can have the same assurance ten years from now that I have today.

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"You see," I continued, "our Lord does not compel the sinner to become a saint." Pastors Jones and Smith nodded assent. "Neither does my Lord compel a saint to remain a saint. But if the saint chooses to remain a saint and claims the promises of our Lord, he can have the same assurance of salvation every day of his life. God gives us faith (Romans 12:3), but He does not compel us to activate that faith. He gives us power to believe. He gives us the equipment, but we can choose to either believe or doubt."

Later that evening, as I pondered our visit, I wondered if these pastors had heard some of the same answers to the question of our being saved that I have sometimes heard. It is this: When some one is asked if he is saved, he may answer with a puzzled expression, "I hope so." That answer really gives me concern. In fact, it makes me shudder.

Let me explain. Let us suppose my son, Glenn Coon, Jr., is introduced to a stranger one day. Upon learning that his name is Glenn Coon, the man's eyes brighten as he asks, "Say, I heard a pastor Glenn Coon preach at the camp-meeting. Would he be your father by any chance?"

Then my son gets a rather sheepish look on his face, and in disbelief says, "I hope so."

You know, my friend, if word of an incident like that would ever reach us, both his mother and I would be embarrassed, and ashamed of our son. It would hurt us. And I think you can understand why.

Now, don't you think our heavenly Father feels a sense of hurt when we find ourselves unable to speak with any measure of conviction with regard to our relationship with Him?

There are those who think it a mark of humility to be in doubt as to their state of salvation. I submit to you that doubt with regard to our salvation has nothing to do with humility. It is my opinion that those who wander around in the maze of doubt and question with regard to this important matter have allowed Satan to steal something vital from them. Someone has worded it this way:

"Satan is ready to steal away the blessed assurances of God." "It is the privilege of all who comply with the conditions to know for themselves that pardon is freely extended for every sin. Put away the suspicion that God's promises are not meant for you. They are for every repentant transgressor." Steps to Christ, pages 52, 53.

The prayer of reception teaches us that we have a right, through Christ, to receive forgiveness, cleansing, assurance, and fellowship. We are given this assurance by the pen of inspiration. Notice these words:

"Every promise in the Word of God furnishes us with subject matter for prayer, presenting the pledged word of Jehovah as our assurance. Whatever spiritual blessing we need, it is our privilege to claim through Jesus." Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, page 133. (1956 Edition.)

It is not my intention to go further into our visit with these two sincere preachers that evening. I met them on this one occasion only, but it served to bring some of these vital things to my mind.

I do believe, beyond any question, that God wants us to be able to declare, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." 2 Timothy 1:12. God does not want us merely to "hope so." He wants us to "know so."

The Apostle John had a great deal to say about this matter. Notice with me some of his statements taken from his first epistle that show the assurance we may have in Christ:

"I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father." 1 John 2:13.

"I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning." Verse 13.

"Ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." Verse 29.

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"But we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him." 1 John 3:2.

"And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins." Verse 5.

He also says, "Ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." Verse 15.

This helps us to see that it is impossible for any man, while stealing, killing, committing adultery, or any other sin, to say, with any meaning, "I am saved."

There are many more verses in the writings of John which make clear that we have a right--a sacred right--to know our standing before God. Let me cite just one more:

"Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." 1 John 4:13. We make it a habit to claim a promise of the Holy Spirit every day and sometimes several times a day. I make it a practice also to claim Him before I deliver every sermon from the pulpit, and before I make a missionary visit in the home.

Yes, I believe we have a right to say we know--right now we know! It is because right now we choose. It is because right now we claim His promises. God does not want us to give a questioning testimony of His grace or His saving power. He wants it to be clear and uncluttered.

We should always be able to give the world a ringing testimony of our personal Saviour. It is our privilege, with assurance that is born of faith in God's promise, to exclaim, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: ... now are we the sons of God." 1 John 3:1, 2.

Are you tempted to question God's willingness to save you? Are you tempted to think that salvation has too many prerequisites? Notice these words from a Christian writer:

"The Bible does not teach that the sinner must repent before he can heed the invitation of Christ, 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Matthew 11:28. It is the virtue that goes forth from Christ, that leads to genuine repentance. Peter made the matter clear in his statement to the Israelites, when he said, 'Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.' Acts 5:31. We can no more repent without the Spirit of Christ to awaken the conscience than we can be pardoned without Christ.

"Christ is the source of every right impulse. He is the only one that can implant in the heart enmity against sin. Every desire for truth and purity, every conviction of our own sinfulness, is an evidence that His Spirit is moving upon our hearts." Steps to Christ, page 26.

Yes, dear friends, salvation can come only from God. He is waiting, longing to give it to us if we will but let Him do it--if we will but cease resisting His working on our hearts. Allow me to repeat these few lines once again. I think they form the basis for a most powerful conviction of truth:

"The sinner may resist this love, may refuse to be drawn to Christ; but if he does not resist he will be drawn to Jesus; a knowledge of the plan of salvation will lead him to the foot of the cross in repentance for his sins, which have caused the sufferings of God's dear Son." Ibid., page 27.

Isn't it wonderful to know that we can respond to the call of His Spirit by asking, believing, and claiming His wonderful promises? Then we can with sweetest assurance declare:

"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." 2 Timothy 1:12.

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Now, I do not want to be misunderstood. I do not want to give anyone the impression that there is no battle to fight, no struggle in which to engage. On the contrary, we are engaged in a very real struggle. It will continue daily so long as we are on the Lord's side.

Says the Apostle Paul, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Ephesians 6:12. We also fight an unending battle with self. We fight against doubting God's precious promises; against questioning His love, His mercy and His forgiveness. It is a fight of faith. It is a struggle, always whether to yield to, or resist His Spirit's pleadings. There will be no letup as long as we breathe the breath of life.

Neither would I give you the impression that once one reaches the height of a Mount Carmel experience, he may not soon be under a juniper tree, in complete discouragement, if he temporarily loses sight of God. Elijah, David, Solomon, Abraham, and other Bible heroes all had fabulous experiences with God, only to utterly fail later tests. Our failures only pinpoint our need to keep on with the ABC's of prayer when we have temporarily neglected our communion with God. And if, when we, like Elijah, fail miserably, let us not forget that this man of God was still translated to heaven without seeing death. So can we be that is, if Jesus comes quickly.

So by Asking, Believing, and Claiming His promises, we may cry out, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." John 17:3. And "I know whom I have believed." 2 Timothy 1:12.

I challenge you to make your claim--now!

Quiz 19

1. When Pastor Jones asked the author of this book, "Are you saved?" why was he visibly shaken at his reply? _____.

2. Why could the author say he was saved? _____
_____.

3. Thought question (true or false): If I can only work to improve myself, maybe five or ten years from now I will be good enough to be saved. _____.

4. Why is it better to state, "Christ is my Saviour" rather than, "I am saved"? _____
_____.

5. Why can we not predict that at a given time in the future we know we will be saved? _____
_____.

6. True or false: When someone asks us if we are saved, it is a mark of humility to say, "I hope so." _____.

7. Multiple choice (circle one): Those who wander around in the maze of doubt and question with regard to this important question of salvation:

- a. Have allowed Satan to steal something vital from them.
- b. Are not accepted of God because they are not perfect.

8. Complete: "Put away the suspicion that God's promises are not _____"

Note: We cannot say that we cannot claim the promises because we do not have faith. Romans 12:3 states, "God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." The problem is we do not exercise it.

9. Why do we have a right to say we KNOW-right now? (two reasons)

- a.
- b.

10. True or false: We must repent before we can come to Christ. _____.

11. How can we respond to the call of the Holy Spirit? _____
_____.

12. Multiple choice (circle one): The battle we must fight is:

- a. To obtain victory over sin in our weakness.
- b. To fight against doubting God's precious promises.

13. True or false: If we become discouraged, temporarily losing sight of God-we should give up. _____.