



Global College of Ministry

EXPLAIN

The Christian and Church Doctrine

The Scriptural Use of Tokens in the Church

“And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them”
(Acts 19:11-12).

In the Bible, symbols and tokens represented actual things. We see oil, wine, water, rain, and fire as being symbols of the Holy Spirit.

In many churches today we find the use of different symbols and tokens. Many of these are taken to extremes. When it comes to healing we must understand that God can perform healings and miracles without the use of any symbol or token. Psalm 107:20 says, “He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.” We can receive healing and miracles through faith in the Word of God and His power. However, it seems that God also allows symbols or tokens to be used as a visible point of contact to release faith in the hearts of His people. There is not any power in either handkerchiefs or anointing oil. The power comes from God and is received by having faith in His ability to touch us.

When using tokens/symbols there can be two extremes to avoid:

1. Totally avoiding the use of handkerchiefs and anointing oil.
2. Over emphasizing, misusing, or becoming unnecessarily dependent on the use of these items.

These lead to the same practices used in spiritualist churches. Some people have used items like holy water, anointing oil, and anointed pieces of cloth to enslave ignorant people. We must be careful of both extremes. Just because some misuse these tokens does not mean we should avoid them altogether. We need to follow the Scriptural principles and manner of which they were used in the Word of God.

We need not try to be strange by coming up with all sorts of tokens and symbols to make us different from everybody else.

We must also be careful not to begin idolizing the tokens used. We should not have faith in handkerchiefs or anointing oil. It would be easy to develop faith in the symbol/token and not in the God who is behind it. It is not the object that is powerful. As ministers we must direct the faith of God’s people to God and not into an object.

Eastwood Anaba in *Operating Spiritual Gifts* suggests five reasons why God allows the use of symbols and tokens in the church.

1. The release of faith.

2. Multiplication of the minister (when we cannot reach someone, the anointing from the ministry is multiplied to them). In Acts 5:15 it appears that the shadow of Peter healed people. In effect, there were two Peters.
3. Symbols provide variety (different points of contact).
4. They prove the sovereignty of God. He uses the foolish things of this world to confound the wise (1 Corinthians 1:27).
5. Actions of faith. Sometimes God instructs you to do things in the Holy Ghost that symbolize what God is trying to do in your life.

Agabas bound both his hands and feet with Paul's girdle and then prophesied (Acts 21:11).

Jesus used saliva when He opened the eyes of a blind man (John 9:6, 7).

Handkerchiefs

With sending handkerchiefs to the sick, note the following:

1. It is not the handkerchief that is anointed but the people who pray over the handkerchief. In the Biblical example taken from Acts 19 it says, "from his body." Paul was anointed, and the cloth was a point of contact with that anointing. It would not be wise for everyone to start distributing anointed cloths. Some even charge money for this. This was not the intent with Paul. He merely was multiplying the empowerment that was on him by using tangible means. He began to have an impact on more people than he could lay hands on.
2. In Acts 19 the handkerchiefs and aprons were brought to the sick people. The sick were not in the same location as Paul. This is why we occasionally send an anointed handkerchief from our prayer ministry to someone who may be sick. We cannot actually get to them.
3. There is no reference in the Bible that would indicate we are commanded to continue to send out handkerchiefs. There is no proof this became a practice in the New Testament Church. What we do see is that those anointed men of God made an impact on their world and miracles were done.

Anointing Oil

In James 5:13-15 oil is used. This oil was specifically used for healing, not like the mass anointing services we hear about today. The only other New Testament reference to anointing people with oil is found in Mark 6:13 and was for the use of healing the sick.

1. We are to call for the elders of the church when we are sick.
2. It is the elders of the church who will anoint us with oil. It is not something every member of the church should do. Some want to carry little bottles of anointing oil in their purses, etc.
3. There was not any power in the oil. It merely represented the power of the Holy Ghost and is used to aid us with faith. The power was in doing it in the "name of the Lord" (James 5:14)

and in praying over the person. The Bible says, “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16).

Study Questions

1. What are two extremes to avoid when considering using tokens? _____

2. Provide one Scripture that shows that you can be healed without the use of a token. _____

3. What are the five suggested reasons for the use of symbols and tokens? _____

4. In the use of handkerchiefs and oil what is actually anointed? _____

5. Where do we find the use of oil as it relates to healing in the Bible? _____

6. There is not any power in the oil but the power is in what/who? _____

7. Who should anoint the sick with oil? _____

Additional Notes

Where Does God Dwell?

“Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen. Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David; Who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. But Solomon built him an house. Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things?”
(Acts 7:44-50).

What a shocker! In his first and last sermon, a deadly one for him and the longest speech on record in the Book of Acts, Stephen told a group of angry Jews that God did not need a building to live in. God lives in the hearts of Spirit-filled men. He cannot be confined. He cannot be contained. He cannot be explained. He is everywhere present and nowhere absent. A simple basic of the Bible is “In the beginning God” (Genesis 1:1).

Altars

Altars were important throughout the Old Testament. A quick search shows 433 references. The Jews had altars where they offered their sacrifices. In the New Testament the cross was the altar where Jesus Christ offered Himself as the spotless sacrifice.

The altar was revealed early in the Bible as a basic in approaching God. Noah built the first altar after he left the ark. (See Genesis 8:20.) Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, and many others in the Old Testament built altars.

When Abraham arrived in Canaan, he immediately built an altar to the Lord. There the Lord appeared to him.

“And there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD” (Genesis 12:8).

Jacob had a dream at Bethel in which he saw a ladder reaching from earth to heaven. Angels were coming down and going up.

“Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it” (Genesis 28:16-18).

Years later he returned to Bethel, built an altar and renamed the place El-Bethel. Bethel means “house of God,” and El-Bethel means “the God of the house of God.” It is one thing to have a “house of God,” but better to have “God in the house of God.”

The Tabernacle

“And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them” (Exodus 25:8).

God instructed Moses to build a portable church called the Tabernacle. It was the church in the wilderness, a picture and a shadow of heavenly things to come. It showed all Jesus Christ was going to accomplish on earth. Moses carefully obeyed God’s instructions and built the Tabernacle according to the pattern (for a pattern).

“Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD” (Deuteronomy 12:11).

Old Testament believers worshiped God in their homes and also in a place chosen by God Himself. Believers still have a common place of worship where they come together.

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25). Also read Matthew 18:20.

The Old Temple

David, a man after God’s heart, had a dream. He wanted to build a house for God. He dedicated the last years of his life to collecting funds and materials to construct the Temple. Solomon took over this project, and it took seven years to build.

At the dedication of the house of God, fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice. The glory of the Lord appeared in a visible manifestation. God gave Solomon this promise, “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14).

When the New Testament Church was established and dedicated (Acts 2:1-3), the fire of the Holy Ghost came down and sanctified the sacrifice. This time the sacrifice was not an animal, but a group of people yielded to the Lord.

Jesus had promised that He would build His church. This was fulfilled in Acts as the apostles carried out the great commission. They were ordinary people serving an extraordinary God. Jesus is the wise Master Builder and our Chief Cornerstone.

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 16:18-19).

The Temple was much nicer than the Tabernacle. However, the Temple design copied that of the Tabernacle.

“...The Temple had a powerful symbolic role in Israel’s faith. Israel’s God was one, and the people who worshipped him were one. The emphasis on one place of worship taught both the unity of God and the unity of God’s people, a unity based not on race but on loyalty to the God of the covenant.” (The *Revell Bible Dictionary*, Page 966)

Over the years three Temples stood on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem. Solomon built the first one. The second was built by Zerubbabel, and the third by Herod the Great. The Temple built by Herod was one of the wonders of the ancient world. It was destroyed in A. D. 70.

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).

Every Christian is a living temple to God. We have been chosen to be of service to our God.

Among the heathen, temples were always regarded as sacred. They believed them to be inhabited (lived in) by the gods to whom they were dedicated.

God dwelled in the Tabernacle, then in the Temple, but now He dwells in us. God comes into us (His temple) when we receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

“To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27).

“For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building” (1 Corinthians 3:9).

Study Questions

1. Who gave the longest speech on record (in the Book of Acts)? _____

2. How do we know that “altars” were important in the Old Testament? _____

The Church in the Wilderness

“This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us” (Acts 7:38).

The Tabernacle, God’s Plan for Fellowship

God always has a plan! The Tabernacle was God’s plan for fellowshiping with man in the wilderness. He allows us to see His plan for continued fellowship in the church.

The Tabernacle, like many things in the Old Testament, was a picture of things to come. It was an “example and shadow of heavenly things” (Hebrews 8:5). The Tabernacle is also described as a “pattern,” “a symbol” and/or “a type.” Each part had a special meaning. Christians are fascinated with the study of the Tabernacle.

 The purpose of the Tabernacle was so God could dwell with His people. Later the Temple was built for the same purpose.

“And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them” (Exodus 25:8).

 Jesus came and dwelt among men.

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

 God continues to dwell in His people through the Holy Spirit.

“And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (2 Corinthians 6:16).

 One day we will go and dwell with God.

“In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:2-3).

The Tabernacle was a portable building, a tent-like structure. In the wilderness, God’s people moved from place to place. They had to have a church that could move with them.

Around the Tabernacle was an outer court. Inside were two rooms. Each morning the priest entered the first room, the Holy Place. The second room, the Holy of Holies, was entered once a

year. Here God met with man. The high priest only entered on the Day of Atonement (in October) to sprinkle blood on the cover of the mercy seat.

When the Israelites set up camp, this portable worship center was placed in the center of the encampment. Later it was placed at Shiloh, a place all of the tribes of Israel could easily reach.

Israel had twelve tribes. Three tribes camped on each of the four sides of the church in the wilderness.

The first group was pitched on the east side, toward the rising sun, and was led by the tribe of Judah. Jesus Christ was the "Lion of the Tribe of Judah." To receive salvation, you must enter through Jesus Christ.

"Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shown to thee in the mount" (Hebrews 8:5).

"But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building" (Hebrews 9:11).

Built with Stirred Hearts and Willing Hands

The willing hands of God's people constructed the Tabernacle. What a tremendous example to us.

"Take ye from among you an offering unto the LORD: whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the LORD" (Exodus 35:5).

"And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the LORD's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for the holy garments. And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing-hearted . . . and every man that offered offered an offering . . . unto the LORD" (Exodus 35:21-22).

"The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the LORD, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work, which the LORD had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses" (Exodus 35:29).

Paul wrote, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). God must have been thrilled with the willing and sacrificial giving of His people.

There is much to learn about the Tabernacle. This lesson is not an in-depth study. However, we will look at the six pieces of furniture in the portable church. Each piece had a purpose in God's perfect plan.

Located in the Outer Court

Brazen Altar

This was the first piece of furniture where sacrifices were made for the sins of the people. It was made of shittim wood (a type of humanity) and overlaid with brass (a type of judgment). God started the fire on the altar, and it was never to go out. God gives us salvation, but we must maintain it.

The brazen altar was a symbol of the cross of Christ. At the cross Jesus made the offering for our sins, once and for all. He was the perfect sin offering. At the altar sacrifices were made for the sins of the people. No one could enter the Tabernacle without passing by the altar. No one can approach God without taking Christ as the sacrifice for his sins.

Brazen Laver

The brazen laver was a type of the second portion of the gospel—the burial of Jesus Christ. It was a type of the burial and of cleansing. Here the priest washed his hands and feet. If he had entered without doing this, he would have died.

The way to be baptized is by complete immersion in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is easy to remember that the brass pieces of furniture were the ones outside the tent.

Holy Place

Golden Candlestick

God always includes light in His plans for His people. The golden candlestick helped the priests see. It was placed opposite the table of shewbread and was made of pure gold. The light from the candlestick was to never go out. It was the only light in the Holy Place and was the light of divine revelation. It was a type of Jesus Christ, our Light. Jesus wants us to travel the right path in obedience to His Word.

“Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12).

Table of Shewbread

This table was located inside the Tabernacle. Each week twelve loaves of shewbread, representing the twelve tribes of Israel, were placed on this table. It showed the fullness of God

and that He provides everything. The shewbread was food for the priest. It was sprinkled with frankincense and renewed every week. Frankincense was a gum with a bitter taste. The table of shewbread represented the Word of God. We must read the Word regularly for strength. Like the gum, the Word of God is sometimes bitter. God knows what is best for us. We cannot eat sweet things all the time.

Altar of Incense

The duties performed at the altar were the priest's last before entering the Holy of Holies. The altar stood in front of the veil. The priest burned incense on this altar every morning and evening. The altar of incense was a type of prayer and of our Intercessor, Jesus Christ. The incense was a type of our prayers and praises. It was offered daily, and we must pray without ceasing. On the Day of Atonement the priest placed blood on the four horns of the altar of incense. These horns signified power. Through prevailing prayer we have power with God.

The Veil

The veil represented the humanity of Jesus Christ. Bill Paramore writes in *The Tabernacle – God's Shadow of Salvation* that, "as the veil of the Tabernacle concealed the glory of God, which shone between the cherubim, the flesh of Jesus concealed the glory of God inside the humanity of Jesus. The Tabernacle Veil was a silent prophecy that some day God, who was Spirit alone, would appear wrapped in a veil of flesh. The invisible Jehovah was to come to earth in human form (1 Timothy 3:16; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Colossians 2:9).

Man could not look upon God and live, yet God wished to reveal Himself to mankind. The only way was for God, who is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29), to conceal Himself in human flesh. So, God created Himself a body and dwelt among men. This way man could look upon Him, but the only way they could know who He really was, was to know Him personally."

The veil shut people out of the presence of God. This all changed at Calvary. The veil was torn from top to bottom, at three o'clock in the afternoon, the time of the evening sacrifice. At this time the priest was offering the passover lamb on the brazen altar. At this same instance, Jesus was offered as the final passover lamb on the cross of Calvary.

Holy of Holies

Ark of the Covenant

This was a rectangular box made of shittim wood and covered in gold. The lid of the ark was called the mercy seat. On each side of the mercy seat was a cherub of beaten gold. Here God dwelt. The only light in the Holy of Holies was the shekinah glory. Inside the ark were the Ten Commandments, the golden pot of manna, and Aaron's rod (that budded).

The ark was a type of Jesus' resurrection power. Like Christ, the ark led the people as the priests carried it on their shoulders. When the ark stopped, the people rested. Jesus will lead us to our eternal resting place, heaven. The cherubim represented the Word of God. Their faces looked toward each other. The Old Testament looks toward Jesus. The New Testament looks back to the Old Testament.

Study Questions

1. How does the Tabernacle reveal God as a planner? _____

2. What was the purpose of the Tabernacle? _____

3. What were the two rooms inside the Tabernacle called? _____

4. Why was a portable church needed in the wilderness? _____

5. How many tribes were in Israel? _____

6. What one word describes the heart and spirit of those who gave to the construction of the Tabernacle? _____
7. What is the brazen altar a symbol of? _____

8. How many pieces of furniture were in the Tabernacle? _____

9. What is the golden candlestick a type/picture of? _____

10. What is the brazen laver a type of? _____

11. Where were the brass pieces of furniture located? _____

12. How many loaves of bread were placed on the table of shewbread? _____

13. What did the table of shewbread represent? _____

14. What is the incense a type or picture of? _____

The Acts of Angels

“But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life”
(Acts 5:19-20).

The ministry of angels is biblical. “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” (Hebrews 1:14).

Angels are mentioned nearly three hundred times in thirty-four books of the Bible. In the Book of Acts alone angels are referred to twenty-one times. In Revelation angels are mentioned in seventy-four references.

“For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways” (Psalms 91:11).

Angel means, “messenger.” Angels are heavenly messengers created by God before He made the earth. Angels perform many activities at God’s command.

Originally, all angels were good. But, because they had freedom of choice, some joined Satan in his rebellion. These lost their heavenly role and became fallen angels. Both good and bad angels are active today. Good angels are concerned with furthering God’s purposes. They act under God’s authority. They cannot just do their own thing.

At times angels appear as human beings, but they never become human. In the Bible, angels of God usually appeared masculine (male), but they do not actually have a gender. Good angels are seldom visible to us because we would be tempted to worship them.

“Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares” (Hebrews 13:2).

Angels Declare Messages from God

Acts begins with the promise of power at Pentecost (Acts 1:8) and the return of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

“And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:10-11).

Jesus' friends watched Him going up to heaven until He disappeared into a cloud. They stood looking up into the empty sky. Suddenly, two men dressed in white robes appeared. They promised that Jesus would come again.

Angels Direct Souls to the Men of God

"He saw in a vision . . . an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius . . . Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter . . . he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do" (Acts 10:3-6).

God responded to Cornelius's sincere prayers by sending an angel who told him that his prayers had come before God as a memorial and that he should send for Peter.

Angels cannot convey the message of salvation. Only humans can do that. However, often preaching the gospel is connected with angelic intervention and help.

Although angels never preach the gospel, they do rejoice when someone repents.

"Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:10).

Angels cannot preach the gospel because:

-  The task of preaching the gospel has been assigned to men. Fulfilling the commission of evangelism is redeemed mankind's job.
-  They cannot speak of the gospel from personal experience. The most powerful tool in preaching/witnessing is a person's testimony (experience).

Angels Set the Captives Free

The apostles had been arrested and put into jail for proclaiming the name of Jesus. The first of three "jail house miracles" recorded in the Book of Acts is in chapter 5. An angel came at night and opened the prison doors. What were the apostles to do now? The angel told them to go right back doing what they had been doing, preaching the gospel.

"But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life" (Acts 5:19-20).

Later, King Herod went after some of the preachers. He killed James and imprisoned Peter. Herod planned to kill Peter at the favorable time. But God had other plans. He sent an angel.

The angel kicked sleeping Paul in the side and told him to get up, get dressed, and get out. Peter followed him to safety, thinking all the time that it was just a dream.

“And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews” (Acts 12:11).

Angels Reveal God’s Assignments to Men

Philip was having a great time preaching the gospel and spreading the salvation message to large crowds. Then his direction changed for the sake of one Ethiopian man traveling from Jerusalem to Gaza. Philip left a place flowing with revival for a dry place where a lonely man waited to drink from the wells of living water.

“And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert” (Acts 8:26).

Angels Have Power to Destroy

After Peter’s jailhouse escape, Herod was still up to no-good. He beheaded those who had allowed Peter to escape. One day he appeared before the people, who sweet-talked and flattered him. And he believed it! He liked being referred to as the “voice of God.” God had enough and sent an angel to kill him.

“And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost” (Acts 12:23).

Angels Encourage and Inspire

Paul sailed to Rome on a ship that was headed for trouble. Paul warned, “I see only disaster ahead of us. It is too dangerous for sailing. Our lives are in danger.” The crew ignored his warning. After all, Paul was a preacher, and they were trained seamen. Out at sea the storm struck, and they lost control of the vessel. The sailors lost all hope of rescue. Paul told them, “Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete . . . And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man’s life among you, but of the ship . . . For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee” (Acts 27:21-24).

Satan Transformed Into an Angel of Light

Satan is able to transform himself into an “angel of light.” This spirit presents a gospel different from the one that the Scripture teaches. His deceitful workers will appear like ministers of righteousness. Adam Clarke says, “they would be as industrious and as generous in promoting error as the apostles were in preaching truth; they would endeavour as much to undermine the kingdom of Christ as the apostles did to establish it.” They sometimes “look like an angel of light, in order to promote his kingdom of darkness.”

“And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Corinthians 11:14-15).

Let us briefly examine two situations.

A young camel driver named Mohammed meditated on many different religions and had frightening visions. His first thought was that these were demonic, but his wife persuaded him that they were divine. He listened to the angel (whom he decided was Gabriel) and received many so-called revelations. Islam was born. It combines the Bible with Mohammed’s doctrines. These doctrines often contradict the Bible. They see Jesus only as a prophet. It is the second largest world religion after Christianity. Islam continues to grow.

A young man named Joseph Smith also sought to know which religion was right. This fifteen-year-old boy related a vision where it was revealed to him that all churches were abominations. He thought he was called to restore the true gospel. An angel of light appeared to him. Three years later another angel of light appeared to him, telling him about some gold plates on which the true gospel was written. Smith said that he found these plates on a nearby hill. He was able to translate the plates, using a special pair of glasses supplied by the angel of light. He founded the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8).

It Is Time to Think

1. This lesson has dealt mainly with “Acts of Angels.” Can you think of other examples of angels in the Old and New Testament? _____

2. Have you heard any story about angels in modern day? _____
3. Why is it that in African society (and many other places) you hear more about demons and demonic manifestation than you hear about angels? _____

Study Questions

1. How many times are angels referred to in Acts? _____

2. Who are angels? _____

3. How did bad angels (demons) come into existence? _____

4. Why cannot angels preach the salvation message (gospel)? _____

5. List five responsibilities (functions) of angels in the Book of Acts.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

6. How does Satan transform himself into an “angel of light”? _____

7. Explain the origin of Islam. _____

8. Explain what you have learned about Joseph Smith in this lesson. _____

Grabbed by Grace

“And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all”
(Acts 4:33).

“But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they”
(Acts 15:11).

In this lesson we will look at one of the favorite words in Christian circles—“grace.”

The early church experienced great power and grace. They believed it was through grace that they would be saved.

It is not enough to be grabbed by grace (to experience the unmerited favor, and kindness of God). We must obey and allow grace to lead us into salvation (Acts 2:38). We then continue in obedience to the Word of God. We should turn from godless living, and sinful pleasures, to right living. It is not acceptable to have one foot in the world, and one foot in the church.

It is hoped that the study of this lesson will encourage you to make a fresh commitment to live Christ-like in this evil world. It is possible to live in such a way that we frustrate God’s kindness to us.

Paul testified, “I do not frustrate the grace of God” (Galatians 2:21).

It is often quoted:

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Grace has a purpose. It leads us to salvation (Titus 2:11-12). Grace is not salvation. Neither does it exempt us from following the plan of salvation.

Many talk so loosely about grace. Have you ever stopped and pondered to see what it means?

Grace means—

- Good-will (goodness of God toward us).
- Loving-kindness.
- Mercy.
- The kindness of a master toward a slave.
- The kindness of God toward man.
- Expresses the concept of kindness given to someone who doesn’t deserve it.

- Unmerited favor of God toward fallen man.
- Regarded as the sustaining influence that enables the believer to persevere throughout all the Christian life.

Did you know that it is possible to experience the grace of God, be grabbed by it, and still not be saved?

We will look closely at the lives of two women who were grabbed by grace. Men, do not think these stories do not apply to you. Watch and see—a man grabbed by grace will appear.

There is good and bad news. Which do you want first? Okay, Let us start with the good news.

On September 11, 2002 *Time Magazine* featured an article entitled, “A Miracle’s Cost” and asked the question, “Why isn’t Genelle dead?”

The article explains that nearly everyone who had not left the Twin Towers by 10:28 a.m. on Sept. 11 perished, but not Genelle.

Genelle worked on the 64th floor. She was walking down stairway B when it collapsed. 2,819 people were slain in this horrendous act of terrorism. Genelle was buried in the rubble for twenty-six hours, and was the last of only four people caught in the debris to be found alive.

“Was this luck? Was this the hand of God?”

She was trapped. Everyone else had disappeared, and she found herself alone—just her and God. She feels she survived because she called on God. She prayed, “Help me, Lord!” Eventually she heard voices in the distance. “I’m here!” she screamed as loud as she could. A rescue worker responded, “Do you see the light?” When she reached her hand through an opening, one of the workers grabbed it. She cried out, “Oh God, thank you!”

Genelle knows that if she had died that day she would not have been ready to meet her Maker.

People think she’s lucky. “This is not about luck,” she says, “This is about God having a plan...”

Genelle believes God has a plan for her life, and refuses to live in sin any longer. She was grabbed by grace, and is still holding on!

The article draws this conclusion. “The big answers to why she is here may always lie hidden between her and God.”

That is a story from recent history. Now it is time to turn to the Bible and get into the Word.

The question now is not “Why isn’t Genelle dead?” It changes to, “Why is Lot’s wife dead?” The angels were sent to Abraham with a dual message. Good news and bad news.

The good news—Abraham would have a son.

Sarah laughed. The angels heard and asked, “Is anything too hard for the Lord?”

What is the bad news?

Sodom (the adopted home of his nephew) would be destroyed.

Abraham was excited over the promised son, but shocked and devastated over the possible loss of his nephew.

He prayed, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Genesis 18:25).

He entered into negotiations with the Creator. He asked God to spare the city for fifty. As God continued to agree, Abraham continued to lower the number.

He asked, “Will you spare the city for ten?” God agreed. There he stopped. Why? He probably thought there were ten saved people in the city—Lot, Lot’s wife, His daughters, and their husbands.

Sadly, only Lot and two daughters would be saved. What a shame. Look at Lot’s family leadership history.

- Lot pitched his tent near Sodom. The cost of compromise is always high.
- Lot was originally a “sojourner” in the land—just passing through.
- Now he had taken up residence. He moved to the city. He knew Sodom was a wicked city, but made a selfish choice to go there anyway.
- He began to act like a citizen. He adopted their lack of morals, and standards. (You become like the people you hang around and can tell the character of a person by the friends he keeps).
- He arranged for his daughters to marry the men from Sodom.
- He was willing to sacrifice his daughters’ purity.
- He became ineffective at dealing with his family, or his son-in-laws.

“When Lot still hesitated, the angels seized his hand and the hands of his wife and two daughters and rushed them to safety outside the city, for the Lord was merciful” (Genesis 19:16, *NLT*).

The angels insisted they leave the city; like now! They were told not to look back. Lot’s wife ignored the angel’s warnings. That is right; she looked back. She became a monument to all who are grabbed by grace but turn back.

She left a message for all who come after her.

“Remember Lot's wife” (Luke 17:32).

Charles Spurgeon says that Lot’s wife perished through sin. He outlines the steps as follows:

1. She lingered behind.
2. She disbelieved.
3. She dared to look back.

“And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62).

It is possible to be grabbed by grace, but not be saved.

What would you do if the heat of the fire was against your backside, and someone offered you a way of escape?

Dropping everything, I would run as if it were a race and only stop when I reached my destination, the place of safety.

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:11-12).

Another translation reads: “For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people. And we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with self-control, right conduct, and devotion to God, while we look forward to that wonderful event when the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be revealed” (Titus 2:11-13, *NLT*).

Now we get to the heart of the matter. There are three blessings of grace:

1. It brings salvation.
2. It appears to all men.
3. It teaches us.

Lessons Taught by Grace

You Cannot Have One Foot in the World and One Foot in the Church

Deny ungodliness	Turn from godless living
Deny worldly lusts	Avoid sinful pleasures
Live soberly	Live in this evil world with self-control
Live righteously	Do right
Live godly	Devote yourself to God
Look for the rapture	Look forward to the rapture

“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other” (Matthew 6:24).

We should not love the world. “World” is mentioned twenty-two times in the five chapters of 1 John.

“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. For all that is in the world, the *lust of the flesh*, and the *lust of the eyes*, and the *pride of life*, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:15-17).

What is your testimony today? Which category best describes you?

- Grabbed by grace, and holding on. Running the race away from the world, and toward heaven.
- Grabbed by grace, and not saved. Looking back, and not fit for the kingdom.
- Grabbed by grace, and ignoring it.

Study Questions

1. What is the meaning of “grace”? _____

2. Write Ephesians 2:8-9. _____

3. What does grace lead to? _____

4. We should turn from godless living to what? _____

5. Write Titus 2:11-12. _____

6. What admonition does Luke 17:32 give? _____

7. How many people were saved from Sodom? _____

8. What does the grace of God teach us? _____

9. What are the three blessings of grace? _____

10. All that is in the world is made up of what three things? _____

The God of the Second Chance

“...And John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.”
Acts 13:13

“And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.
But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia,
and went not with them to the work.”
Acts 15:37-38

“...Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.”
2 Timothy 4:11

Missionary Runs Home to Mama

John Mark was a first generation Christian in the Book of Acts and the young cousin of Barnabas. He had gone on the first missionary journey with Barnabas and Paul but for some reason turned back to Jerusalem. Paul viewed this young man as a weakling and a deserter and refused for him to go on the second missionary journey.

Something took place in the life of this young failure and he later became a success. He is referred to by Peter as “my son.” (1 Peter 5:13) It is commonly believed that he wrote down the testimony of Peter which became the Gospel of Mark. Paul also calls for him and says that he is “profitable.” John Mark’s story is an encouragement and proves that failure is not final and that God extends the promise of a second chance to each of us. Some of the Bible’s greatest successes were once failures.

Converted Failures Write the Bible

John Mark later wrote the Gospel of St. Mark; the shortest account of the life of Jesus Christ. Mark focuses on Jesus as the “man of action.”

The Book of Jonah was also written by someone who had failed by running from the Lord rather than preaching to Ninevah. After three days in the belly of a great fish he repented and surrendered to the will of God. God proved Himself as the “God of the Second Chance.” Jonah preached to Ninevah and they also repented.

1 and 2 Peter was written by the Apostle Peter who shamefully denied the Lord three times. At least Peter followed “...him afar off...” (Matthew 26:58) when all of the disciples “forsook him and fled.” (Matthew 26:56) Peter was not the only failure among the disciples because they all fled. So it was a failure, empowered by the Holy Spirit who delivered the first sermon in the baby church on the Day of Pentecost (which resulted in 3000 conversions).

The first five books of the Bible were written by Moses, a murderer. (Exodus 2:12) However, this failure who became a success, was used to deliver the children of God out of Egypt.

King David, the writer of much of the Book of Psalms, committed adultery, later repented, and God continued to use him (even though the reproach was never removed).

“Failure is Not Final”

“For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.” (Proverbs 24:16)

“Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me.” (Micah 7:8)

“Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.” (Psalm 37:24)

To fall is not failure but to refuse to get up again that is where the real failure takes place. Even when we fall into sin we can repent and get back up again and continue living for God.

PERSEVERANCE ...

is the opposite of the “Let’s-just-quit” attitude.

Paul Reynolds

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” (1 John 2:1)

- 1831 Failed at business.**
- 1832 Defeated for legislature.**
- 1833 Failed in business again.**
- 1836 Had a nervous breakdown.**
- 1838 Defeated for speaker.**
- 1840 Defeated for speaker.**
- 1843 Defeated for Congress.**
- 1848 Defeated for Congress.**
- 1855 Defeated for Senate.**
- 1856 Defeated for Vice President.**
- 1858 Defeated for Senate.**
- 1860 Elected President of the United States of America.**

Mr. Abraham Lincoln refused to allow his failures to discourage him. He kept on going until he won. He turned his stumbling blocks into stepping stones. It has been said before that “by

perseverance the snail made it into Noah's Ark." Perseverance is at the top of the list of qualities needed by a leader and a Christian. Psalms 78:9 says concerning Ephraim, "...being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle."

"If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small." (Proverbs 24:10)

Another account concerning President Lincoln reveals:

At Age 7 **His family was kicked out of their house.**
At Age 9 **His mother died.**
At Age 22 **He lost his job as a clerk.**
At Age 23 **He was left a huge debt.**
At Age 28 **The girl he wanted to marry said, "No!"**
 The lady he wanted to marry before this one, died.
At Age 41 **His four year old son died.**

You might remember the story about the two frogs given in an earlier lesson. The frogs fell into a can of cream, one gave up and died, but the other kicked and kicked until he hopped out on butter.

John Maxwell, in *Be All You Can Be* wrote that "we successfully fail when it stirs us to keep trying. The setbacks that look as though they will finish us off can spur us on to come out on top."

You Can't Bury a Good Donkey Alive

Maxwell tells of a story where a farmer's donkey fell into a well. The farmer decided that he couldn't pull the donkey out so decided to bury it. He got a load of sand and dumped it on top of the donkey. When the sand hit the donkey it started tramping and made its way to the top of the sand. As the farmer continued to pour loads of sand into the well the stubborn donkey continued to kick and climb to the top of the sand. It finally made its way out of the well. "What was intended to bury it turned out to be its salvation." This story reminds me of what Joseph told his brothers who had abused him by selling him into slavery.

"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." (Genesis 50:20)

One proverb says, "Yesterday ended last night!" We cannot allow yesterday's failures to hinder tomorrow's successes. The past is past, it cannot be changed, but there is hope for the future. "For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope..." (Ecclesiastes 9:4) "And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD..." (Jeremiah 31:17) "For I know the thoughts that I think toward

you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”
(Jeremiah 29:11)

Life Is

Carol Shaffron

Life is...
keeping focused,
staying calm
being faithful to your dreams;
ignoring all the other stuff,
no matter how it seems.

Life is...
doing what needs doing,
whether you like it or not;
getting up and starting over,
climbing to the top.

Life is...
keeping on,
when the going is tough;
proving you're tougher
than tough.

Life is...
seeing the trouble,
as a stepping stone,
to take you to the sky;
and flying on the winds of dreams,
higher than the sky.

Life is...
enjoying all the simple things,
And taking time to see
that what really counts is keeping on
no matter what may be...

Study Questions

1. Who was the young missionary that turned back on the first missionary journey? _____

2. How do we know that this young missionary later became successful? _____

3. What are some of the books of the Bible that were written by converted failures? _____

4. Provide a Scripture that proves that "failure is not final." _____

5. Abraham Lincoln turned his stumbling blocks into what? _____

6. What does the Proverb about "yesterday" tell us? _____

7. What lesson do we learn from the donkey that refused to be buried alive? _____

8. We cannot allow yesterday's failures to hinder _____.

9. What is "perseverance" the opposite of? _____

10. How did the snail make it into Noah's Ark? _____

11. What is one of the main leadership qualities mentioned in this lesson? _____

12. What did John Maxwell say about our failures and setbacks? _____