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a *Grace Notes* course

# The Acts of the Apostles

Section I: Acts 1 to 7

an expositional study  
by Warren Doud

Lesson 8: **Acts 3:9-16**

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## Acts 3:9-16

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## **Instructions**

Begin each study session with prayer. It is the Holy Spirit who makes spiritual things discernable to Christians, so it is essential to be in fellowship with the Lord during Bible study.

### **Instructions**

1. Study the lesson by reading the passage in ACTS, studying the notes, and studying the other passages of the Bible which are cited. It is a good idea to read the whole book of Acts regularly, perhaps at least once a month. This will give you a good overall view of the events in ACTS.
  2. Study the topics in the same way, paying close attention to all of the Bible verses which are mentioned.
  3. Review all of the notes in the ACTS study and the topics
  4. Go to the Quiz page and follow the instructions to complete all the questions on the quiz. The quiz is "open book". You may refer to all the notes and to the Bible when you take the test. But you should not get help from another person.
  5. When you have completed the Quiz, be sure to SAVE the file.
  6. Return the completed Quiz to Grace Notes, either by e-mail or regular mail. There are instructions below in the Quiz section.
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**Acts 3:9-16****Acts 3:9**

**And all the people saw him walking and praising God:**

All the usual activity at the Temple stopped when this man came running in.

**Acts 3:10**

**And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.**

The people were shocked and amazed. Everyone recognized this man. He had undoubtedly been brought to the Temple daily for many years. There is no question that there has been a genuine healing here, which might have been doubted if the people had not known this man and the history of his condition.

The purpose of this miracle:

1. The miracle established Peter's apostolic authority, his credentials. It gave him a hearing in the Temple, as well as with anyone else who would learn of this event.
2. It is the basis for meeting the needs of a people. The people need the Gospel; they will now be very eager to listen to Peter as he explains this amazing miracle.
3. The healing of the lame man illustrates God's power to save.

**Acts 3:11**

**And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.**

The lame man kept coming back to Peter and John, probably shaking hands or hugging them in his great joy at being able to walk, and in gratitude.

Solomon's porch (STOIKOS) was on the east side of the court of the Gentiles and was so-called because it was built on a remnant of the

foundations of the ancient temple of Solomon. Jesus had once taught here (John 10:23).

**Acts 3:12**

**And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, You men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? or why do you look so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?**

Peter issues a disclaimer. He is oriented to Grace, therefore he is not arrogant.

Compare the comments of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 14:8-18, when the people of Asia Minor wanted to worship them as Mercury and Jupiter.

The word "power" is DUNAMEI, which speaks of an endowed, or miraculous, energy. Peter implies that he does not have this kind of power, even though it might appear to people that he does. He also indicates that he does not possess some special kind of holiness, or godliness (EUSEBEIA), that qualifies him to be some kind of super Christian.

This verse is an expression contrary to legalism; that is, Peter is saying that it is not some supreme piety on his part that persuaded God to honor him by giving him the ability to heal people. As the whole context of this episode shows, God has healed this man for a special purpose, to show His own power.

The key to having a powerful and productive life is godliness and occupation with Christ. Living in the Word produces edification, wisdom, prudence, and spiritual prosperity and production.

**Acts 3:13**

**The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his Son Jesus; whom you delivered up, and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go.**

Peter makes the entire emphasis salvation. He is teaching here that the entire basis of the Jewish race, "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," is faith in Christ.

**Rom. 4:13,14, “For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect.”**

Read all of Romans 4.

Acts 3:13 is especially notable in this comparison with Romans 4, because Peter was speaking many years before the Epistle to the Romans was written, even years before the Apostle Paul had accepted Christ; yet he was well aware of how God exercised His grace in the salvation of Abraham, along with all other believing Jews, from Abraham forward.

Abraham was born a Gentile – he became a “Jew” by regeneration; he was born again. (Gen. 15:16)

His brother Nahor was also a Gentile. But he remained a Gentile, and he died a Gentile.

Abraham’s first son, Ishmael, remained a Gentile; as far as we know, he died an unbeliever.

But Isaac was in the line of the Jews, those who believed God, because of his faith. The difference between Isaac and Ishmael was not that they had different mothers; it was a difference in their attitudes toward the Lamb of God.

Likewise, between Jacob and Esau there was an obvious difference in volitional response to God and His plan. Therefore, Jacob is named in this line of faith.

“denied” is EIRNEISASTHE = “renounced; betrayed.” The Jews in Jerusalem betrayed Christ in front of Pilate. This is much stronger than a simple denial of Him.

“determined” is KRINATOS = “judged.” Pilate made a judgment, and he decided that it was proper and just to let Christ go. However, even though it seems he wanted to act according to justice, his actual decision, to wash his hands of the situation, was contrary to justice and equity.

Peter is saying, in effect, “Even Pontius Pilate wanted to act according to justice; but you have acted contrary to all justice and equity.”

#### Acts 3:14

**But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you;**

The “Holy One” is the “Separated One.” Jesus Christ was “set apart” to be the Savior.

**Psalm 16:10, “For you will not leave my soul in hell; neither will you suffer your Holy One to see corruption.”**

“just” = “perfect” – a reference to the Lord’s perfect righteousness and justice.

The “murderer” was Barabbas (Bar-Abbas). There is very little about him in the Bible, but he is a historical figure. He was a well-known insurrectionist, or revolutionary, in Judea, operating out of the Negev desert. At the same time, however, he was a crime boss, and led a gang of thugs and marauding bandits who murdered people and stole anything of value.

#### Acts 3:15

**And killed the Prince of life, whom God has raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.**

“the Prince of Life” – referring to Jesus Christ. Christ is “the Life.” See notably,

**1 John 5:11,12, “And this is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that has the Son has life; and he that has not the Son of God has not life.”**

The Jews listening to Peter were responsible *only* for the Lord’s physical death.

Three hours prior to his physical death, God had poured out on Christ the sins of the world. Then, the Father judged Christ, and had to separate Himself from the One who was bearing all of our sins. This led Christ to cry out, “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me!” This was effectively the spiritual death of Christ; and it was totally apart from his physical death.

**2 Cor. 5:21, “He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”**

“whom God has raised from the dead”

The death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ are the most important events in human history. That Jesus Christ rose from the dead is an established historical fact verified by many eyewitnesses and by a great deal of corroborating evidence.

The first actual eyewitnesses to Christ's resurrection were his disciples, among them Peter and John, who are addressing this crowd.

The most important proof of the resurrection is that of the testimony of the people who were actual eyewitnesses to the resurrection of Christ. Eyewitness testimony would be acceptable in any court of law, either in Roman or Hebrew courts of the time or in modern American courts.

### Acts 3:16

**And his name through faith in his name has made this man strong, whom you see and know: yea, the faith which is by him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.**

Very important: at some point, this man placed his faith in Christ! It may have been before he was healed by Peter. He could have heard the Gospel in the days leading up to this event and accepted Christ. Or, he could have been saved as Peter and John spoke to him.

“perfect soundness” – some commentators state that this man was restored to perfect health in his whole body, that the healing did not only apply to the particular crippling handicap he suffered. It is certain that he had perfect spiritual soundness, which would last for all eternity, regardless of the extent of his physical healing.

In fact, the man's salvation was infinitely more important than his healing. Even if he had not been healed, his physical infirmity would only have lasted through the remainder of his lifetime. At death, he went to be with the Lord, in possession of the new body which every believer will have in eternity.

The verses from Acts 3:17 to 19 are Peter's invitation to salvation.

### Godliness

This is a study of the Greek word ευσεβεια (**eusebeia**), used in the New Testament to express the idea of inner piety, spiritual maturity, or godliness. In TITUS 1:1, the Apostle Paul states that he is an apostle of Jesus Christ according to the criterion of the faith of the chosen people of God who have a full and applied knowledge of the truth which is the standard for godliness.

The word **eusebeia** has an interesting history. It was first used by the Greek poet, Homer, in about 1000 BC. From Homer the word came into use in the classical Greek of Athens (Attic Greek) where it referred to personal piety in the fulfillment of human relationships. It was also used to describe a person who was faithful in fulfilling his duties to whatever Greek gods dominated the city in which he lived. The Attic Greek word always referred to the outward expression of piety, such as the giving of gifts to the god, participation in sacrifices and worship, or making a show of religion in public.

As the word **eusebeia** began to be used in the **koine** Greek, it came to mean “inner piety”, or spirituality, a duty which the believer owes to God in the inner man. The principle in the Titus context is that of the control or filling of the Holy Spirit which produces qualities of conformity to Christ.

The following scripture passages contain the word **eusebeia**, invariably translated “godliness” (in the KJV). Read these verses along with their contexts before continuing in the next section.

ACTS 3:12

1 TIM. 2:2; 3:16; 4:7,8; 6:3,5,6,11

2 TIM. 3:5

2 PET. 1:3,6,7; 3:11

#### PRINCIPLES OF EUSEBEIA

A true man of God has qualities of inner piety - the characteristics of a spiritually mature person. This is not a phony façade put on to please or impress people. The source of this godliness is the Word of God. The godly person has not only learned doctrine academically, but he has also seen that word applied to his life in edification over a period of years.

Spirituality is an absolute quality, depending on a believer's walk with the Lord, and particularly on his maintaining his fellowship with the Lord through confession. But none of this is visible.

So - how can you tell when true spirituality and maturity are present? Or, how do you know the difference between a godly man and one who is merely well educated and in control of himself? A carnal believer, the novice Christian, can be moral, can use the right vocabulary, can wear a suit and carry a Bible. He can fool some of the people some of the time.

But the godly believer is known by "his fruits" - the fruit of the Holy Spirit - things that an unbeliever, or the carnal believer, cannot produce. Godliness is produced in the life of a Christian who is both learning doctrine and growing thereby through edification.

Read GAL 5:19-21, the works of the flesh.

The works of the flesh are obvious enough. They are the product of an inner life controlled by the sin nature, by the trends and lusts of the soul. And as a Christian grows in Christ, he gains victory over areas of weakness. The Christian Way of Life is characterized by the putting away of negatives, the sin that so easily besets, and by putting on the new man.

GAL. 5:22-26

EPH. 4:17-25.

The new man not only lives in the Spirit (**not visible**), but he also walks in the Spirit (**visible**). One of the great themes of the Epistle to Titus is that of the outward walk, which is a demonstration to the world that the inner life which is claimed is genuine. Three illustrations are given in Titus 2.

1. In TITUS 2:4,5, young women are to be taught how to lead godly lives so that "the Word of God be not blasphemed." We have a responsibility for public opinion about the Word of God.
2. In 2:7,8, Titus himself is told to show himself a "pattern of good works" and to have "sound speech that cannot be condemned" in order not to supply detractors with ammunition for their criticisms.

3. And in 2:9,10, servants are to maintain godly lives in their relations to their masters in order that they might "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things." We are to live as "decorations" to the doctrine of God.

The whole letter to Titus is an inspired document which, among other things, provides many illustrations (in chapters 1 and 2) of how godliness (**eusebeia**) is supposed to be observed in the outward characteristics of believers of all ranks: overseers and elders, older men, older women, younger women, younger men, servants, and Titus himself.

Godliness is the concept of the inward life and the outward appearance of the fruit of the Spirit.

For example, in the spiritual fruit of **love** we see genuine care and regard for people, an impersonal love for people who are different, even though they are enemies. This love results in the **philozenos** of TITUS 1:8. [See the notes on Characteristics of Impersonal Love]. Love is the absence of mental attitude sins and sins of the tongue. The negatives have been eliminated from the believer's life so that (1) he no longer hates, despises, disdains, or envies other people, (2) he no longer maligns or ridicules them, and therefore (3) he is free to have a ministry with others that is not hindered by offensiveness or bitterness.

**Joy** is the spiritual fruit which enables a Christian to have happiness that does not depend on the details of life. He has a stable mental attitude from looking to Jesus and trusting the Father for everything. He does not fall into moody depression when things go wrong or he is criticized or maligned. He does not fall into wide emotional swings. He does not depend on others to prop up his happiness. I TIM. 6:6, "Godliness (**eusebeia**) with contentment is great gain..."

A believer who has **peace** is a master of the Faith-Rest technique. He is nearly unflappable, because he has a lot of practice in placing every distress, every disaster, in the hands of the Lord. He is the most relaxed person in the neighborhood. He does not have chronic worry about the present or future. He knows that the Lord can handle everything. So he is not paranoid. Even if someone is really out to get him, he is relaxed and praying, even for the

enemy who is plotting against him. He places great confidence in the Lord, especially regarding death, knowing and resting in the fact that “absent from the body” means “present with the Lord.” So he is **not** one of those who “through fear of death are all their lifetime subject to bondage” (HEB. 2:15).

Well, for homework, you can make up your own descriptions for the remaining parts of the fruit of the Spirit: Longsuffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, Temperance. Just remember that God’s plan for you is that you continue to be a godly Christian.

## Repentance

### Acts 2:38

**Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

This is one of the Bible’s most controversial verses; many systems of false religion have been built on it. The most prominent is the concept of baptismal regeneration, the idea that water baptism is required for salvation. Baptismal regeneration is the most widely taught form of salvation legalism, the idea that a person can actually do something (be baptized) to help save himself.

Any ritual involves human activity, human merit, human *works*. And water baptism is a ritual in which someone is *doing* something.

“Works,” whatever they are, are not accepted by God as contributing to a person’s salvation.

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

**“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit,” (Titus 3:5)**

## “REPENT”

The English word “repent” is from the Latin, *re + poenitere*, meaning “to regret; to be sorry”. The Oxford English Dictionary has the following meanings:

1. To affect oneself with contrition as regret for something done or for something inherently wrong, some fault, misconduct, sin, or other offence.
2. To feel contrition, compunction, sorrow, or regret.
3. To change one’s mind with regard to past action or conduct through dissatisfaction with it or its results.

You can see that peoples’ opinions of what is required for salvation is colored by which of the above definitions they chose. That is, if you choose #1 or #2 you could assume that, in order to properly repent, you must feel great sorrow or regret for your sins.

Now, regret can range from a mild regret to a life-threatening sorrow. A mild regret says, “Oh, I see I’ve been wrong; I’ll do it the other way.” A severe regret is a raging sorrow which can destroy one emotionally and physically, as from some unintentional action that harms a loved one.

So, a person may feel a tremendous regret about sin: the offense to God, the effect on others, etc. Or, a person may not know enough about sin, or its consequences, to have much regret at all. For many people, the first they hear about sin is in an evangelistic message or Bible class.

For example, someone who grows up in a permissive family in a permissive society may not know that sex outside of marriage is a sin and has very bad consequences. It take Bible doctrine to know Sin for what it is!

Regret over past sins actually grows as one is edified, as a person gains divine viewpoint and sees real issues in life. If a believer doesn’t learn about forgiveness, confession, and restoration to fellowship, he might build up a tremendous guilt complex about his past. This is why it’s such a blessing to know that past sins have been forgiven. “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”

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Now if “repentance” is “feeling sorry for sin,” then how sorry do you have to feel? Mild sorrow or raging sorrow? And how do you demonstrate this sorrow to God? These thoughts lead people into such extremes as asceticism and self-punishment of one kind or another great attempts to impress God, and other people, with the extent of one’s contrition.

Another question arises from this, “Will I have to wait until the end of my life, or until I face God, to know whether my sorrow has been enough?

And, “What about my lack of knowledge of sins? How many sins are there that I don’t even know about? How much sorrow must I have about each type and variety? Must I feel as sorry for gossip as I would for murder?”

The question here, of course, is “works.” Can repentance be misconstrued to support a “works” doctrine? Yes it can, *if feeling sorry is made a necessary constituent of salvation*. Just as in all forms of legalism, there is great potential here for bullying by clergy and “informed” laymen.

Definition #3, on the other hand, taken alone, indicates that repentance can be just a mental change that does not necessarily involve emotional sorrow.

To resolve these vocabulary problems, the Greek word must be studied.

The Greek for “repent” is METANOEW, which means “to change the mind; to rethink something.” The cognate noun METANOIA, Rom 2:4, means “a change of mind; a conversion; a turning away.” Divine viewpoint changes every bit of human viewpoint you’ve learned.

*There is no emotion or feeling involved in this activity.* Therefore, if we are going to use the English word “repent” to translate METANOEW, we must be certain that the English Definition #3 (above) is meant!

METANOEW, as an active verb, needs to have an object in context. One must change one’s mind about something. You might change your mind because of an honest mistake. You bought a Ferrari and now you can’t pay for it. Or, you may receive some education, and that changes your thinking about many things.

Repentance is a theological concept we study to explain the mechanics which occur at salvation.

If you have accepted Christ as Savior, at some point you changed your thinking about your sin, your relationship to God, and about the work of Christ for salvation.

Likewise, if you have studied the Bible as a Christian, the Word of God has led you to change your mind about many things.

**That you put off concerning the former manner of life the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,**

**And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;**

**And that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. (Eph. 4:22-24)**

When you decide to commit a sin, you are certainly not thinking divine viewpoint. When you are convicted by the Word of God, and by the Holy Spirit, you have an opportunity to adjust your thinking to God’s point of view. This leads to your confession, “expressing the same viewpoint” as God. Before you confess your sin, you first undergo a change of thinking about the sin. METANOEW precedes HOMOLOGEW.

Repentance is *not* a turning away from sin in order to accomplish salvation. A person *is* guilty of sin; he *does* need forgiveness; and he *should* stop sinning. But, victory over sin is a process of the Christian life.

An unbeliever cannot have victory over sin. A person can turn over a new leaf, clean up in a few surface areas, spruce up the facade a little. But who would a person be satisfying. One might fool himself and others that he’d done enough if he didn’t have a very good idea of what God’s demands actually are.

Sin is too pervasive; there are too many sins. Mental attitude sins, sins of the tongue, open and public sins. You can’t turn away from all your sins, even temporarily.

You can see what a vicious circle the legalist is in, the one who thinks he can lose his salvation. If it were possible to lose salvation, assuming someone

were successful in earning it in the first place, salvation could never be maintained.

Let's compare Acts 2:38 and Acts 16:31, in which the Philippian jailer is told simply to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."

We can see that "believe" (PISTEUW) and "repent" (METANOEW) are virtually synonymous in their application.

Both require focusing one's attention on Christ.

Both require positive volition to the Gospel.

Both require acceptance of divine viewpoint regarding Christ and His work on the Cross.

Both mean that you have information that you did not have before and that you accept a point of view.

Both mental attitudes are non-meritorious, that is, neither involves any sort of works.

The Jew, however, is going to have a more wrenching experience as he turns from his religion to Christ. "Repentance" means that, however much he loves his religion and follows his religious practices, he no longer trusts in the works of his religion to save him. He trusts Christ.

The Philippian jailer has no such hold over his mind. He accepts Christ readily, with no religious reservations. He is simply a man in trouble grasping at a straw which turns out to be a lifeboat.

When witnessing, you only give information, you do not try to get the unbeliever to "repent." That is the function of God the Holy Spirit using the Gospel information you have provided. God the Holy Spirit will encourage people to change their mind about Christ. Whether a person actually does repent depends on that person's volition when hearing the Gospel message.

### REGRET IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

There is a Greek word for "regret," METAMELOMAI, which should always be translated "regret," never "repent," because it has an emotional connotation. It means to feel sorry for something you have done.

It is used to express regret for a previous action (Matt. 21:29).

It describes the attitude of Judas Iscariot (Matt. 27:3) He regretted what he had done to our Lord, but he never repented, he never believed in our Lord for salvation.

It is used for God having no regrets about saving people and giving spiritual gifts in the Church Age, (Rom. 11:29).

Likewise, the Father has no regrets regarding the appointment of Jesus Christ as our High Priest, (Heb. 7:21).

### ILLUSTRATIONS OF REPENTANCE

Exo. 13:17. The Jews were not mentally prepared to fight for their freedom. God knew they would change their minds, say that slavery is better, and attempt to go back to Egypt, if they saw war coming. So here repentance means to come up to a new set of facts, be influenced by these facts rationally, and then to retreat.

Jer. 8:3-6, speaking of Judah. When you fail, you don't quit or give up. You get up and move on. When a person doesn't repent with regard to salvation (unbeliever), or Bible doctrine (believer), then your lifestyle is out of control due to evil in your life.

### BELIEVING IN CHRIST: REPENTANCE FOR SALVATION

Salvation repentance is that change of mind which occurs when a person understands and believes the Gospel.

This is the principle of common grace, in which the Holy Spirit takes the message of the witness and makes it a reality in the mind of the unbeliever.

An unbeliever cannot understand spiritual phenomena, 1 Cor. 2:14.

Therefore the Holy Spirit acts to bring about perception of the Gospel, John 16:8-11; 2 Tim. 2:25.

After understanding the issues of the Gospel, a positive volition expresses itself in a change of mental attitude: faith in Christ. Faith in Christ and repentance are two sides of the same coin. A

change in mental attitude about the person and work of Christ equals repentance.

Repentance results in faith in Jesus Christ, salvation adjustment to the justice of God. And it is at the moment of repentance that God the Father provides the whole Salvation package to the new believer.

Matt. 1:14-15 teaches that first you change your mind about Christ and then you believe. Matt. 12:41; Luke 13:2-3, 5; 15:7,10; Acts 17:30; 20:21; 26:20; Rom. 2:4; Heb. 12:17.

2 Pet. 3:9, God is "not willing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."

Growth in the Christian life demands repentance toward human good, Heb 6:1.

Human good is good works produced by any person, Christian or non-Christian, apart from the filling and control of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

An unbeliever, of course, does not have the indwelling Holy Spirit, and cannot be filled with the Spirit. All good produced by an unbeliever is categorized as human good.

A Christian is, at any moment, either filled with the Holy Spirit (spiritual) or not filled with the Spirit (carnal).

The good produced by a spiritual believer is divine good (gold, silver, precious stones). The good produced by a carnal believer is human good (wood, hay, stubble).

Human good is dead to the plan and policy of God, Gen. 2:17.

Human good is linked with arrogance and produces boasting, Eph. 2:9; Rom. 4:2.

Human good is never acceptable to God, Isaiah 64:6.

Human good will not save man, Eph 2:8-9.

An unbeliever's human good will be judged, Rev. 20:12-15.

The believer's human good will be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ, 1 Cor. 3:11-16; Rom 5:10; 2 Cor 5:10.

A change of attitude about sin is taught in Rev. 2:5, 16, 22.

A change of attitude toward Bible truth is the basis for recovery from backsliding, Rom 2:5; Rev 3:19.

## WHEN GOD REPENTS

In the Bible, God is said to "repent" of things. Gen. 6:6; Exo. 32:11-14; 1 Sam. 15:35; Psalm 90:11-13; Jer. 25:3,13.

But God is immutable and does not change. He does not change His mind. Therefore, these passages ascribe to God a human characteristic, in order to explain or describe God's judgment in a human frame of references. This is an anthropopathism.

An anthropopathism ascribes to God a human characteristic He does not possess, but explains divine policy in terms of human frame of reference.

## Faith

### BELIEF AND BELIEVING

One of the most important considerations in the Christian way of life is the subject of the believer's faith. Several questions are always paramount in a person's thinking about faith, such as:

*What is faith?*

*How does a person exercise faith?*

*How can we have stronger faith?*

You will occasionally hear a person say something like this, "I don't believe anything that I can't see or feel." Or, "You really can't prove that there is a God, or that Jesus was what He claimed to be; and I'm not going to believe anything that I don't know is true!"

When a person says that he refuses to believe anything that is not proved, he ignores the fact that everyone believes unproved facts every day. If people were not willing to place their confidence in unproved facts, the whole world would grind to a halt -- no one would be able to move.

In practice, a person employs the mental process of faith dozens of times every day, just to carry out life's routines. Faith is a Standard Operating Procedure of human life. The discussion in this essay will show that God has made faith an integral part of human existence so that anyone in

the world can have salvation and can experience Christian growth with all of its benefits and blessings.

Because Bible study is, in part, a study of past events and of ancient writings, the first section of this paper is a discussion of the uses of faith in the study of history. The intention of the whole paper is, (1) to give a Christian added confidence in the use of faith, and (2) to provide a fairly thorough treatment of what the Bible says about the subject. Some of the ideas herein can be used effectively in witnessing to skeptics or to those whose ideas are hazy about salvation by faith.

The second section shows how faith is used in learning Bible truth, and it includes a comparison between the three systems of learning, empiricism, rationalism, and faith.

The third section deals with what the Bible says about how Christian faith is developed and strengthened.

The fourth section contains an etymological study from the original Greek and Hebrew words used in the Bible which are translated as "faith" or as some equivalent.

We shall see that as a mental activity Christian faith is no different from everyday faith. The unbeliever can use ordinary faith, the willingness to believe something, to accept the Gospel message and obtain salvation. The believer can use faith to acquire knowledge of Bible doctrine and to make application of those principles in his daily walk with the Lord.

### **Faith and the Study of History**

A person who studies the past, and who writes about it, is continually involved with the concept of faith. First, he must decide which of his sources are reliable enough to be believed, for only with credible sources can the historian have any chance of reconstructing accurately an event or social situation.

Then, the historian must express his thoughts in writing in a manner calculated not only to inform his readers but also to encourage their belief, their faith, in the propositions he sets forth. A careful student of history will have faith only in historians who meet his standards for honesty.

### **THE COMMON HISTORICAL BIAS**

But there are many historians, and other people, of course, whose opinions about historical facts are colored by their religious and anti-Biblical prejudices. Many people have adopted a viewpoint which makes it impossible to view historical data objectively, especially data which deals with Biblical events and issues. This false viewpoint, a set of biased presuppositions, includes the following conclusions:

- There is no personal God.
- Therefore, there is no supernatural and miracles are not possible.
- We live in a closed system, the earth with its human race, into which no outside force can intrude, nor over which any God has control.

A skeptic holding these views approaches the study of the Bible "knowing", for example, that Christ did not rise from the dead, because these things just cannot be. These conclusions themselves, however, amount to an exercise of strong faith, albeit in the wrong direction. Instead of beginning his study with the recorded historical data and an open mind, this individual precludes a balanced approach by a sort of metaphysical speculation.

### **VALID HISTORICAL METHODS**

All arguments and systems begin with presuppositions (even the Christian system). This does not mean that all presuppositions that one might adopt are equally desirable. In considering any important idea, it is better to begin with presuppositions of method, which will yield truth, rather than with presuppositions of substantive content, which assume a body of truth already.

No study of the past has a right to assume a closed system of causation. Historical events are unique, and the test of their factual character can be the only acceptable documentary approach.

What does the historian do, then, when he experiences a surprise which runs counter to all his expectations, counter to his convictions, against even his culture's whole understanding of truth? Why, he must say that it is surely possible; because, for the critical historian, nothing is a priori impossible! It is not the objective of the

historian to construct a history from preconceived notions and then to adjust it to his own liking, He must, rather, reproduce history from the best evidence, and let it speak for itself.

History, then, is knowledge of the past based on testimony. And the plausibility, the believability, of history depends on the trustworthiness of the witnesses, not upon the erudition of the historian.

**HISTORY AND BIBLE STUDY**

Studying the Bible in the 20th Century involves a great deal of intense historical scholarship. One begins by placing some confidence, or faith, in early Christian witnesses and authorities. This confidence may very well be tentative at first; and one may test each hypothesis thoroughly before going deeper into study, certainly before going out on a limb by making dogmatic statements. At each decision point in study, faith must be exercised.

One does not have to prove beyond a shadow of doubt that Jesus Christ was Deity. What one does is weigh the evidence, evaluate the pros and cons. The results of careful study show that Christ *must be* who and what He claims to be. In fact, many people have begun studying the claims of Christ, intending to refute the Bible statements, only to end up confirming what they had originally set out to disprove!

A criterion of absolute truth would wipe out all knowledge, because a person could never find a place to stand to begin his study. The Christian begins by accepting the proposition that the Bible is the Word of God. Then, as he learns each new doctrine, he makes decisions. First, he decides whether to believe the doctrine as he understands it. Then, he decides whether to apply the doctrine in his life through believing the teaching, by claiming the promise, or by obeying the commands given. As each new idea is tested and put into practice, it becomes part of the foundation for further learning and spiritual growth.

**HOW THE BELIEVER USES FAITH**

**FAITH COMPARED WITH EMPIRICISM AND RATIONALISM**

The Biblical concept of faith is that it amounts to complete confidence in something for which there

is no empirical or rational proof available. "Faith is the substance of things in which one has confidence, the evidence of things not seen."  
HEB. 11:6

A person is said to have faith in something if he has believed it without having had a physical demonstration of it or a logical explanation of the truth behind it. Saying this another way, a person who has believed something without having it proved to him has exercised faith. Faith is, therefore, distinguished from the two other methods of learning, empiricism and rationalism.

Empiricism is a technical word which refers to the using of scientific methods to learn something or to prove something. The scientific method relies on the five senses for the proof of propositions. And each experiment produces either verification or refutation of the idea or point of view. A child who does not take his mother's word for the fact that the stove is hot may attempt empirical proof by touching the stove himself. He receives immediate experimental verification of the truth of his mother's statement.

The term rationalism is used to describe the method of arriving at proof through the logical method. This is proof by logical process of reason. In rationalism, logic produces documentation or refutation of a point of view. Both empiricism and rationalism are very useful in learning; but neither is equivalent to faith.

**FAITH USED IN LEARNING**

Faith can also be described as a method of perception, or learning, which accepts an established criterion as the basis of reality. It is very convenient, and necessary, to use faith in this way. If we were to demand rational or experimental proof of everything stated to us, we would never get anything done.

Suppose you were using a mathematics textbook which made the statement "The sum of the angles of a plane triangle is 180 degrees." Using faith, you could accept that statement as a true fact, and you could build your study of triangles using this fact, even though you had not seen a formal proof of its validity.

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To insist upon proof of this statement, however, would mean that you would have to take a course in Geometry where the formal, logical proof of this statement is developed. But if you were a total skeptic (in the subject of triangles), you wouldn't even be able to begin the geometry course, because you would not be able to accept the statement, by faith, that "the shortest distance between two points on a plane is a straight line", one of the foundational axioms of plane geometry. You can see that faith is very useful, even indispensable, in every learning situation.

To this point in the study of faith, then, we have developed a partial understanding of what faith is and how it is used. Faith is:

- Complete confidence in something which is not subject to logical or experimental proof
- Acceptance of an established criterion as the basis of reality

### **The Christian's Faith in the Bible**

The "established criterion" which the Christian accepts by faith is that the Bible is the Word of God. The Christian accepts the Bible as being what it claims to be, the "mind of Christ". By adopting this presupposition, the believer has a basis from which to delve into the whole Bible with its hundreds of concepts vital to all aspects of human life.

The faith system of learning Bible truth is the only fair way for man to know and approach God. No one can claim personal credit for having believed the Bible, because even a person of very low intellectual ability can believe and understand Bible truth. Therefore, the faith system for acquiring doctrinal knowledge is perfectly fair and compatible with Grace. It is the only method of learning which is commonly available to all members of the human race.

The value of faith does not lie in the strength or intensity with which a belief is held. (Every confidence man depends upon his victim's believing very strongly in lies.) The merit of faith lies, rather, in the idea or object which is believed. Faith is valid only when it has a valid object.

Saving Faith has as its object the Lord Jesus Christ and His substitutionary work on the Cross for

man's salvation, John 3:36; Acts 16:31. A belief in any other "plan" of salvation, however strongly and emotionally held, will prove to have been faith in an invalid and useless object, Acts 4:12.

Living Faith has as its objects the facts, promises, and commands of the Bible, Matt. 4:4. Faith in Bible principles is the only method which will unlock spiritual truth, I Cor. 1:18 to 2:16. The believer who is growing spiritually receives continuous verification that the divine principles upon which he bases his life are perfectly valid, Eph. 4:11-16.

### **How to have strong faith**

The strongest, best established faith is that which is the result of Christian edification, that process by which a believer is rooted and built up in his spiritual life, Col. 2:6,7. One of the most important results of Christian growth is the progressive increase in the believer's ability to use faith. Several important factors in the development of Christian faith are listed here along with some representative Bible passages.

- Faith requires the continuous intake of truth from the Word of God. "...faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God...", ROM. 10:17.
- Faith is part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit and requires the control of the Spirit for its function. "...the fruit of the Spirit is...faith...", GAL. 5:22,23; EPH. 5:18.
- Faith must be exercised daily by (1) using Faith-Rest principles in day to day living, "...we who have believed do enter into rest...", HEB. 4:1-3; and (2) by using Faith Patience in all situations, "...the testing of your faith worketh patience", JAMES 1:3.
- Applied knowledge overflowing from the human spirit, which refers to all witnessing, requires the exercise of faith. "...that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith...", EPH. 3:17-20.
- Moving towards maturity includes the development of great faith. "...this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith...", 1 JOHN 5:4,5; HEB. 11:6.

- Daily occupation with the Lord Jesus Christ "completes" faith. "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith...", HEB. 12:2.
- Undeserved suffering both tests and strengthens faith. "...the trial of your faith...", 1 PETER 1:7,8.

#### The Word "Faith" in the Bible

In the Greek language of the New Testament there are five words which are rendered "faith" in the King James Version. They are:

πιστις, (pistis), noun, meaning "faith; faithful; reliable; that which is believed", and, with the definite article, "doctrine"

πιστος, (pistos), adjective, meaning "dependable; inspiring of trust; believing"

πιστευω, (pisteuo), verb, meaning "to believe; to be convinced"

πειθω, (peitho), verb, meaning "to obey (in the present tense); to be persuaded (in the aorist); to have confidence (in the perfect); faith (all tenses)"

πιστωω, (pistoo), verb, meaning "to show oneself faithful; to feel confidence"

In the Hebrew of the Old Testament there are ten words which are rendered in the King James Version as "faith" or as some equivalent idea of belief or trust. They are:

AHMAN, verb, "to believe without merit"

EIMOON, noun, "belief; faithfulness"

EIMOONAH, noun, "truth; steadiness; doctrine; faith"

AHMEIN, noun, "truth; doctrine"

OHMEIN, noun, "faithfulness"

EMETH, noun, one of the strongest words for truth

BAHTAK, verb, the Faith Rest verb which was originally a word used by wrestlers for giving someone a body slam. See PSALM 37:3; 91:2. It means "to slam your troubles on the Lord", and it means "faith" in the sense of the function of the Faith-Rest principles. This verb is used extensively in the Old Testament.

KAHSAH, verb, PSALM 57:1, used of a rabbit fleeing from a desert fox and finding refuge in the cleft of the rock where the fox can't reach him. Means "to believe" in the sense of finding refuge in the Word or taking shelter in the Lord.

YAHKAL, verb, "to trust" in circumstances of pressure or suffering. JOB 13:15; LAM. 3:21,24.

KAHWAH, used in the sense of binding or twisting strands of fiber together to make a rope. Threads which are weak in themselves are woven together into strength. The meaning is that we are weak and can be broken, but woven into the Lord and His Word, we cannot be broken. ISA. 40:31; LAM. 3:25.

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## Lesson 8 Quiz

The following questions relate to your study of this lesson.

To answer a question, type your response in the space provided after the word “Answer:”. A question may be True/False, multiple choice, fill in the blank, or short answer type.

The last question requires you to write one or two paragraphs in “essay” form. Use the space provided; it will expand to accommodate your response.

You have choices about sending the quiz back to Grace Notes.

- If you received an email file containing the quiz, you can use the REPLY feature of your e-mail application to open the quiz. Enter your answers in the reply message. Then SEND the message to Grace Notes.
- You can enter your answers on these pages, then send the whole file back to Grace Notes as a file attachment. As an alternative,
- After you answer the questions here, copy and paste the whole list of questions into a new MS Word document; then, send the new file to Grace Notes as an attachment. The new file will, of course, be much smaller than this main file.
- Finally, you can print the Quiz pages on your printer and send your response back to Grace Notes in the regular mail. If you do this, send the mail to:

**Grace Notes**

**% Warren Doud**

**1705 Aggie Lane**

**Austin, Texas 78757 USA**

Whichever transmission method you use, when Grace Notes receives your completed Quiz, the next lesson will be sent to you, by the same means you received this one. EXCEPT: when you have sent in the FINAL QUIZ, we will send your certificate to you, by regular mail.

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### QUIZ on Acts I - Lesson 8

This Quiz may have Multiple Choice, True/False, Fill-in-the-Blank, and Short Answer questions. Type your responses after the word "Answer:" following each question. The last question is an essay question and requires you to write a few sentences. Type your response following the questions.

1. The miracle of healing served to establish the credentials of Peter and John as being genuine apostles of God. [True/False]

Answer:

2. Solomon's Porch was in downtown Jerusalem, near the marketplace. [True/False]

Answer:

3. In what scripture do we read of Paul and Barnabas' being called Mercury and Jupiter by people they met on their missionary journey?

Answer:

4. "The promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to \_\_\_\_\_, or to his seed, through the \_\_\_\_\_, but through the righteousness of \_\_\_\_\_." [Fill in the blanks]

Answer:

5. Who was the "murderer" whom the Jews wanted released instead of Christ?

Answer:

6. Where could we look in the Bible to find a list of the works of the flesh?

Answer:

7. What is the purpose stated in the Epistle to Titus as to why young women are to be taught to live godly lives?

Answer:

8. Joy is spiritual happiness which does not depend on \_\_\_\_\_.

Answer:

9. Repentance is the act of self-sacrifice, or penance, that a person must do in order to be restored to fellowship with the Lord. [True/False]

Answer:

10. Human works are not accepted by God the Father as being part of the price for a person's salvation. [True/False]

Answer:

11. In what scripture passage do we find the concept of being "renewed in the spirit of the mind" in order to "put on the new man...?"

Answer:

12. What is salvation repentance?

Answer: /

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13. Does God ever repent?

Answer:

14. The Biblical concept of faith is that it amounts to complete confidence in something for which there is no empirical or rational proof available. [True/False]

Answer:

15. The statement "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" is found in

\_\_\_\_\_.

Answer:

End of Quiz

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