



## **Advanced Bible Correspondence Course**

### **Lesson 2 The Misery of Man**

#### **LORD'S DAY 2**

##### **Q. 3. WHENCE KNOWEST THOU THY MISERY?**

**ANSWER: OUT OF THE LAW OF GOD. (ROMANS 3:20)**

#### **What is misery?**

What actually is misery? It means that we are in a wretched, extremely unhappy situation. There are many examples: war, hunger, quarreling, unemployment, addiction, homelessness, poverty, illness and death. There is much trouble, sorrow and misery in this world. All this misery is the result of sin. But real, actual misery is much more far-reaching. We can read this in Genesis 3: we lack God. Because of the fall of man, we are without God in the world. The cause of all misery is sin, the falling away from God. We lost God's gracious goodness and His wrath rests upon us. After the fall, a curse was laid upon man. In Romans 3:9-20 we can read how great our misery is.

#### **Knowledge of our misery out of the Law**

Most of the time we don't feel our misery. We do not act like miserable people. Often we live on cheerfully. Hence, we have the question: "Whence knowest thou thy misery?" The answer is "out of the Law of God". This is a biblical answer. In Romans 3:20 we read: "*For by the law is the knowledge of sin.*" We do not learn our misery out of the newspaper, but out of the Law of God. We find an example in Romans 7:7, where Paul writes that he had not known sin but by the Law. A law is a rule to live by. God, our Creator, gave us the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-21). The Law can be compared with a mirror. A mirror shows us what we look like. The Law of God is such a mirror. The Holy Spirit shows us by the Law of God how miserable we are. We will never again be able to live according to that Law. The more I see how God wants me to be, the more I feel how sinful I am. I will then say: "Is that me? So wretched?"

#### **Q. 4. WHAT DOES THE LAW OF GOD REQUIRE OF US?**

**ANSWER: CHRIST TEACHES US THAT BRIEFLY IN MATTHEW 22:37-40, "THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH ALL THY HEART, WITH ALL THY SOUL, AND WITH ALL THY MIGHT, AND WITH ALL THY STRENGTH. THIS IS THE FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT; AND THE SECOND IS LIKE UNTO IT, THOU SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF. ON THESE TWO COMMANDMENTS HANG ALL THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS. (DEUTERONOMY 6:5, LEVITICUS 19:18, MATTHEW 12:30, LUKE 10:27)**

## **The Law requires love**

We have seen that we learn to know our misery out of the Law of God. What does that Law require of us? Love! Perfect love toward God and our neighbour. That is the summary of the Law of God.

### **To love God**

In His Law, God requires first and foremost that we love Him from the bottom of our heart. We must love God in everything we do, want and think of. In His Law, God requires more than just the outward deed. It matters why and how we do something. God requires from us that we serve Him with all our hearts. The Lord Jesus says so in Matthew 22:37-40. He was not the first to say that the crucial point is love. He just repeated what Moses already said in Deuteronomy 6:5: *“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”*

### **To love our neighbour**

In the second place we must love our neighbour as ourselves. By our neighbour, we understand all people, but especially all those with whom we associate every day. This also includes all our enemies. A clear example is the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). As a creature of God, each person is to love himself. This means to reject harmful things and promote good things. We should deal with our neighbour in this way as well. We must love our neighbour as ourselves. So in summary, the Law of God requires us to love God above all and our neighbour as ourselves.

## **Q. 5. CANST THOU KEEP ALL THESE THINGS PERFECTLY?**

**ANSWER: IN NO WISE (A); FOR I AM PRONE TO HATE GOD AND MY NEIGHBOUR. (B)**

**(A) ROMANS 3:10,20,23, I JOHN 1:8, 10 (B) ROMANS 8:7, EPHESIANS 2:3, TITUS 3:3, GENESIS 6:5 AND 8:21, JEREMIAH 17:9, ROMANS 7:23**

## **God's requirement**

So we must learn to know our misery out of the Law of God. This Law requires love toward God and our neighbour. Can we comply with this? Can we do everything God requires from us in His Law? Can we love God above all and our neighbour as ourselves? This is what God requires. God requires perfection. He is not satisfied with anything less. Because He is God and Holiness itself, He cannot tolerate evil. Not even a little, because He has created us perfect.

### **Haters of God and our neighbour**

Can I keep all these things perfectly? The answer to this question is “No”. Here the student gives an honest answer. One can only give such an answer if the Holy Spirit works in one's heart. From ourselves we think that we can keep this Law. We are usually satisfied with ourselves. We cannot keep the Law of God perfectly. And why not? Because by nature we hate God and our neighbour. That is our misery! “By nature” means that we are born with it. “Prone” means that we cannot and will not do otherwise. We are born as haters of God and our neighbour. *“Living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another”* (Titus 3:3). Our nature is corrupt.

Happily, God often restrains this hatred and wickedness. It is not our goodness if we are not hateful or wicked, but God keeps us from evil, because anything good in this world comes from God.

### Questions:

1. *What is our misery?*

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2. *From where do we learn our misery? Read Romans 3:20*

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3. *What does the Law require of us? Try to summarize this in your own words.*

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4. *Read the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:35-37. Who put into practice “to love thy neighbour”?*

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5. *What is meant by “by nature”?*

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6. *What does “to keep perfectly” mean?*

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7. a. *Why does it say in Titus 3:3: “We ourselves also were sometimes”?*

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b. *What has happened to man since?*

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8. *What happened with man after this “sometimes”?*

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Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_

## Meditation: I Peter 3:8 “Love as Brethren”

Love without reason is a mad passion. Profession without love is but “a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal”; unmeaning noise to others; unprofitable to him that makes it. Love is of God. It is that precious ointment which is poured forth from the Father of love upon the head of our spiritual Aaron, and runs down the skirts of his garment, even upon all his brethren, the children of love. Love descends from God, through Jesus, to us, spreads itself among the brethren, and ascends in grateful odors to the God of love.

The prophet asks, “Have we not all one Father?” Mal. 2:10. Yes, says Christ. “I ascend unto my Father and your Father.” John 20:17. Hence the Holy Spirit draws the image of Jesus, “the first-born of many brethren”, upon each of their souls, and possesses them with the faith of Jesus; and “whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.” I John 5:1. Faith in Jesus is the band or cement of brotherly love. Are we the brethren of Jesus, beloved and chosen of one Father, born again of the same Spirit, partakers of the same grace, heirs of the same promises, travelers to the same kingdom, and shall we not love each other? Alas! Alas! We mourn for the loss of health or of property, but how much greater cause is there to lament the loss of love amongst God’s dear children and Christ’s beloved brethren!

But we are all, like Simeon and Levi, brethren in iniquity; and as with them, so anger and self-will are found with us. Gen. 49:5,6. Both are the effect of pride, and are contrary to faith and love. The question is not, Are we perfectly freed from every passion and temper contrary to love? This we are not to expect in our brethren. God loves us, not as sinless, but as he views us in Christ. Do we really love the children of God as such, love the members of Jesus purely for His sake? Instead of indulging, do we curb and resist, watch and pray against our tempers which are contrary to love? This is a blessed evidence that the root of love is in us. Let us be importunate with Christ, that the fruits may abound more and more to the glory of God, “whom we love, because he first loved us.” Love created happiness, yea, heaven in the heart; it restores paradise to the soul; for “he who dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him.” I John 4:16. “Covet earnestly the best gifts, and yet I show unto you a more excellent way: Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us.” Ephesians 5:2. Love as brethren.

“Love is the grace that keeps her power  
In all the realms above:  
There faith and hope are known no more,  
But saints forever love.”

*Taken from “A Spiritual Treasury for the Children of God” by William Mason*