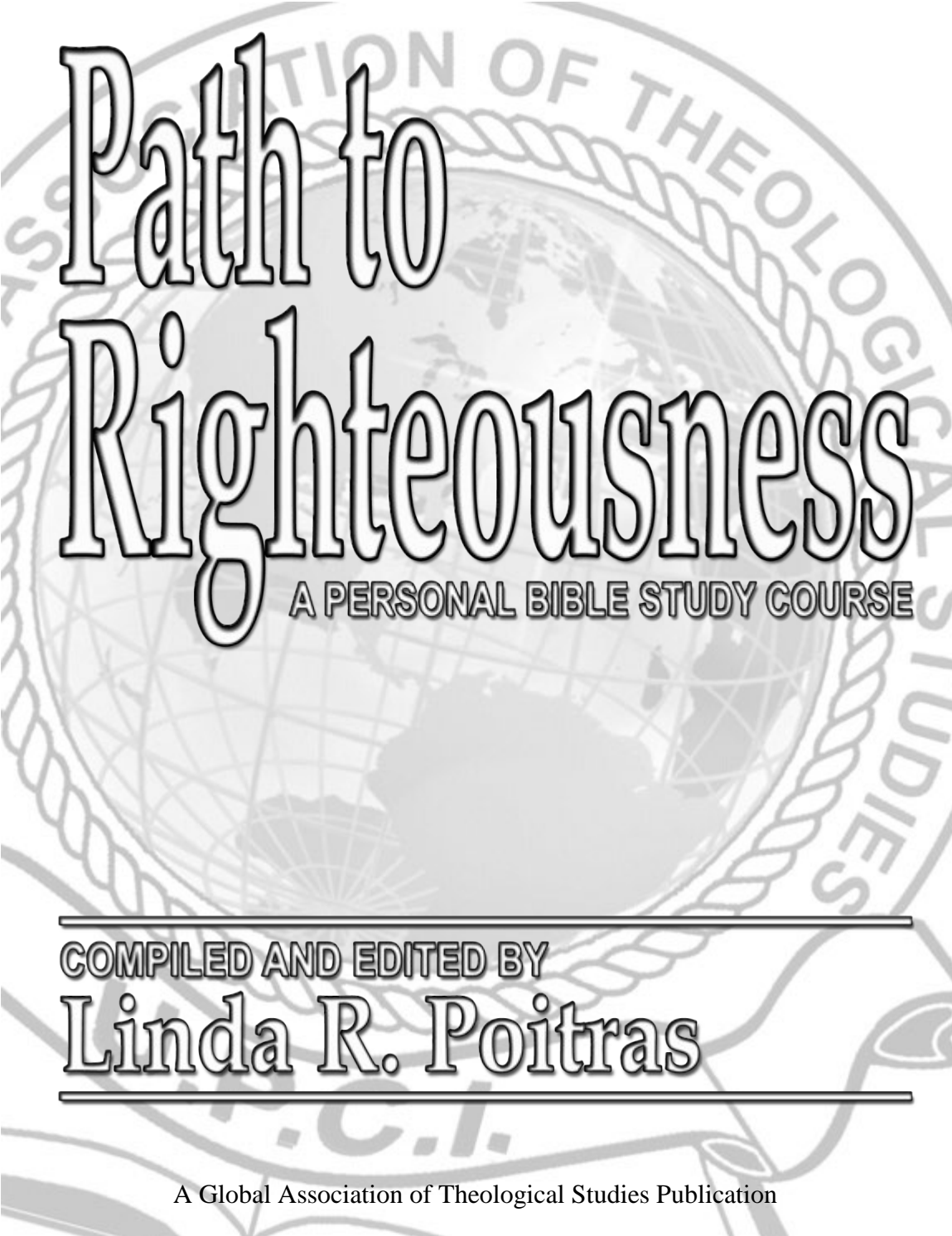


Path to Righteousness

A PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY COURSE

COMPILED AND EDITED BY

Linda R. Poitras



Path to Righteousness

A PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY COURSE

COMPILED AND EDITED BY

Linda R. Poitras

A Global Association of Theological Studies Publication

All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version (KJV) of the Holy Bible unless otherwise indicated.

Scripture quotations marked (NKJV) are from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (ASV) are from the American Standard Version of the Holy Bible. The American Standard Version is in the public domain.

Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (NASB) are from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960,1962,1963,1968,1971,1972,1973,1975,1977,1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (NRSV) are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

GATS Edition
Copyright 2013 United Pentecostal Church International

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Path to righteousness : a personal Bible study course / compiled and edited by Linda R. Poitras. -- GATS Edition.

pages cm

"A Global Association of Theological Studies publication."

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-7577-4239-2 (alk. paper)

1. Righteousness--Study and teaching. 2. Righteousness--Biblical teaching. 3. Theology, Doctrinal--Study and teaching. I. Poitras, Linda R., editor of compilation.

BT764.3.P38 2013

234--dc23

2013025415



Content

Introduction	9	
Lesson 1	Welcome to the “Path to Righteousness”	19
Lesson 2	God’s Word – Our Guide	27
Lesson 3	Faith	39
Lesson 4	Repentance	47
Lesson 5	Water Baptism in the Name of Jesus	55
Lesson 6	The Baptism of the Holy Spirit	63
Lesson 7	The Path to Righteousness – A “Holiness” Highway	73
Lesson 8	Practicing Holiness	83
Lesson 9	There Is One God	93
Lesson 10	God’s Plan for Prosperity	101
Lesson 11	Effective Prayer	113
Lesson 12	Mechanics of Prayer	123
Lesson 13	“When Ye Fast . . .”	129
Lesson 14	Evangelism: Saved to Save Others	139
Lesson 15	Praise and Worship	147
Lesson 16	Marriage and the Home	157
Lesson 17	The Family – God’s Way	167
Lesson 18	Practical Tips for Family Life	177
Lesson 19	Keep On Keeping On	187
Lesson 20	Jesus Is Coming Again	195

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For a long time there has been a need to have something to put into the hands of people that would explain this great church organization—the United Pentecostal Church International. Materials to help establish new converts in the biblical truths that we know, love, and have studied for many years have been lacking. The need has become urgent, especially in countries outside North America where books about our history and doctrine are not readily available.

When we presented this need to the leadership of the United Pentecostal Church International, Ghana, the brethren quickly agreed to work with us. They could readily see that this would be of great benefit to their local churches and the church as a whole. They all felt the burden to see something concrete that they could give their saints as well as something that would introduce newcomers to this glorious way.

And so this book was born. It could never have happened without the vision of our superintendent of the United Pentecostal Church of Ghana, the Reverend Jim Poitras. “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18a). Solomon, the wisest of men, knew that God’s will and His righteous laws as found in the Bible must be repeatedly kept before a people, or they will begin to take on the shape of the world, and go against God’s laws. Jim Poitras found the answer to this dilemma in God’s Word.

The prophet Habakkuk was concerned also when he saw the wickedness of the world in general and a decline in God’s righteousness among the nation of Israel. But God had an answer; His Word always does! “And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it” (Habakkuk 2:2). That is what we have done.

Our superintendent alone could not have accomplished this work, however. He encouraged the able efforts of many people, such as executives and pastors, deacons and ladies auxiliary leaders, who contributed to the lessons found here.

God bless you all for your burden and vision to see this personal Bible study book become a reality. May it bless and strengthen your churches. May the hand of the Lord be upon all who read and study it. And may the Lord smile on all who had a part in its making.

“The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it” (Psalm 68:11).

INTRODUCTION

FOCUS VERSE: “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

“Path to righteousness” sounds like we are looking for the right way to walk. But are we not all innocent and good from the beginning of our lives? Do we not all have a heart that desires to do good and right? Are we not all doing our best to follow the right path?

I wish these questions could be answered with a yes, but unfortunately, they cannot. But why not? Why do we need to find a path to righteousness? What has caused us all to be “sinners”?

In the Word of God, the Bible, we find the answer to every question in life. The Old and New Testaments address these questions all through God’s Word.

I. THE OLD TESTAMENT SPEAKS

From the beginning, God had a plan. He did not just create the world with no vision or goal in mind. He knew what He wanted His creation to do, and He knew how He wanted to bless and help them along the way. “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. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:11-13).

God does not create machines. His creation is able to make up their own minds—the very mind He placed in them. Thus, He created the first man and

woman and gave them only one restriction—they must not eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (Genesis 2:16-17). Adam and Eve had only one prohibition, but God allowed them to choose whether they would obey.

Maybe you have heard the story of how Eve was deceived, but have you heard how her husband did not correct and help her? Oh, he told her about the restriction (Genesis 3:2-3), but he did not stop her when she was tempted by the serpent. How do I know? God’s Word tells me plainly that Adam was with her when she ate of the fruit (Genesis 3:6).

A basic principle that we need to understand is involved here. God had spoken. His Word was clear. He even told Adam the consequences of a wrong choice. But when Adam doubted God’s Word enough to go ahead and do the one thing that God had told him he must not do, God’s Word was still clear. And God could not go against His own Word. He had to keep His promise of death. We need to make a special note of this and remember it throughout our search for the path to righteousness.

“A man is free to make a choice, but not free to
choose the consequences” (T. F. Tenney).ⁱ

The remaining portion of Genesis 3 tells us what God did because of Adam and Eve’s disobedience. He told them exactly what life was going to be like from that point on, and history bears witness that His pronouncement was correct. God said, “For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:17).

The fact that Adam and Eve did not fall dead as soon as they ate of the fruit (as one would do when poisoned) has caused many people to doubt this verse. Yes, Adam and Eve were still breathing after they disobeyed God. But their bodies began a process that eventually ended in death for them physically. The Bible tells us God even put an angel at the entrance to the Garden of Eden to make sure they did not eat of the Tree of Life and live forever. God had not prohibited them from eating of this tree before. But after their disobedience, they were barred from eating of it (Genesis 3:24).

Adam and Eve did die that day—spiritually! They no longer walked with God in the cool of the evening. They no longer had close communion with Him daily. In fact, the Bible does not record that God ever again had a personal conversation with Adam. What a terrible price to pay for one piece of fruit that

“was good for food” and “pleasant to the eyes,” and a “tree to be desired to make one wise” (Genesis 3:6).

This is the first reference made to the lust of the flesh (was good for food), lust of the eyes (was pleasant to the eyes), and the pride of life (to be desired to make one wise). We cannot blame God when we sin. It is our own failure to heed God’s Word and obey His voice.

“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man; but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:13-15).

“And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life; and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:14-15).

The serpent did not escape punishment. Before he was used by Satan, he had been more subtle (cunning or clever) than any beast of the field. The fact that he could talk did not frighten Eve—she must have been used to it. The serpent certainly is not such an animal today. He now slithers along on the ground, unable to make a sound (not even a tweet, moo, or bark) and without a bit of love from man or beast.

“Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (Genesis 3:16).

No matter what people say, if a woman wants to give birth to a child, she will suffer pain and sorrow. And she can never produce a child without a man; therefore, her desire is toward him.

“And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns

also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Genesis 3:17-19).

All over the world, people struggle, sweat, and toil to bring the things they need out of the ground and to put bread on the table for their families—just as God said many hundreds of years ago.

Thus we learn that Adam and Eve began this thing we call “sin” when they chose to perform “an action contrary to the law of God” (according to *Webster’s Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language* definition of sin).ⁱⁱ The shepherd/king David wrote that this tendency toward sin began in every one of us at the time of conception in our mother’s womb. “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psalm 51:5).

The greatest disaster to result from Adam and Eve’s decision, however, was their separation from God. No longer did they commune daily with Him, walking in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day. Now they could not reach God directly. He was unable to come to them as He desired because their disobedience and unbelief in His Word had built a wall of separation. So God had to set in motion another part of His plan.

As someone so rightly stated, “The most harmful part of sin is that it keeps us from God!”

II. THE NEW TESTAMENT SPEAKS

Does God’s Word tell us what this “sin” is all about? Does it show us His plan to bring us back close to Him? Let us first find out what sin is, and how it affects our lives.

The Full Life Study Bible tells us that the Greek words used for *sin* in the New Testament describe different parts of it:

1. *hamartia*: wrongdoing, transgression, sin against God (John 9:41).
2. *adikia*: wrongdoing, wickedness, or injustice (Romans 1:18; I John 5:17); a lack of love, since all wrongdoing stems from a failure to love

- (Matthew 22:37-40); “a personal power that can enslave and deceive” (Romans 5:12; Hebrews 3:13).
3. *anomia*: lawlessness, iniquity, and defiance of the law of God (Romans 6:19; I John 3:4).
 4. *apistia*: disbelief or unfaithfulness (Romans 3:3; Hebrews 3:12).ⁱⁱⁱ

What do all these Greek words (the original language of most of the New Testament) mean to me? All of these words simply mean that the basic root of sin is *selfishness*. And so it is that we find ourselves on the “Road to Please Self – the SIN Road.”

- Sin begins with a grasping of things or pleasures for ourselves, regardless of the welfare of others and the commandments of God.
- This leads to cruelty to others and to rebellion against God and His law.
- Finally, sin becomes the refusal to be subject to God and His Word (Romans 1:18-25; 8:7).
- It is enmity against God (Romans 5:10; 8:7; Colossians 1:21).
- It is disobedience and unbelief (Romans 11:32; Galatians 3:22; Ephesians 2:2; 5:6).
- Sin is not just wrong actions; it is a failure to do what we know is right. “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).
- All unrighteousness is sin (I John 5:17).

Adam and Eve didn’t want to do what God said was right; they wanted to find out for themselves about good and evil. Since the day they made that choice, all of humanity has been struggling with the same thing.

Sin makes it impossible to follow our best human intentions.

- It causes us to commit unrighteousness with delight (Genesis 6:5).
- It makes us take pleasure in the evil actions of others (Romans 1:32).
- It is powerful enough to enslave us and corrupt as we give ourselves over to it (Romans 3:9; 6:12; 7:14; Galatians 3:22).
- It is rooted in human desire (James 1:14; 4:1-2; I Peter 2:11).
- It is something we all struggle with.
- It entered into the human race through Adam (Romans 5:12).
- It affects everyone (Romans 3:23; 5:12).
- It results in divine judgment (Romans 1:18).

- It brings physical and spiritual death (Genesis 2:17; Romans 6:23; James 1:15).

How can we get rid of this sin/curse? The New Testament is a very special account of another part of God's plan for man – *Jesus*.

“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (II Corinthians 5:21).

He knew no sin, but He became sin for us. He came to lead us from the SIN Road to the path to righteousness.

- God knew that as soon as Adam and Eve chose to know “good and evil” that He would have to do something about it. He knew that the next time He came close to humanity, He would have to do it in a different form. He would have to take on the same “flesh” that He had created for them. And so He “became flesh” and dwelt among us (John 1:14).
- The only way to eliminate the power of sin is by faith in Jesus Christ and His redemptive work for all men (Romans 5:8-11; Galatians 3:13; Ephesians 4:20-24; I John 1:9; Revelation 1:5). A lovely story in the Gospel of John is where Jesus Himself told us how this thing must be: “Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). Jesus was trying to help Nicodemus understand that the first time you are born (flesh) you are born with a selfish, sinful nature. But when you are born again of water and of the Spirit, you are now a part of His own spiritual family – with an eternal home in Heaven. What a blessed hope we have in Jesus!
- Romans 5:12, 19-21 tells us, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: . . . For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

- In the writings to various New Testament churches, this wonderful plan that God had to bring us back into communication and fellowship with Him is spoken of again: “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (I Corinthians 15:22). “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Hebrews 9:27-28).

III. GOD’S PLAN WILL LEAD US DOWN THE PATH TO RIGHTEOUSNESS

God still has a plan! He wants to help us every way He can, and He was willing to pay the ultimate price (His shed blood) to be sure that we get off this path of sin and self that we are born following and find a new road. Listen to Paul as he wrote to the church at Rome with this blessed hope:

- “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Romans 6:12-13).
- “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness” (Romans 6:16-18).
- “For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:20-23).

Let us not continue down the path of “self” and the SIN Road, but let us seek and obey the path to righteousness as found in Christ Jesus our Lord.

“He came to save us, not from poverty, or from ignorance,
or from the ghetto, but from our sins. Sin must be dealt
with first.” (Vance Havner)^{iv}

Study Questions

Introduction

1. What is the Focus Verse? _____

2. Where do we find the answer to every question in life? _____

3. What was the one restriction God placed on Adam and Eve? _____

4. What principle was involved in the story of Adam and Eve? _____

5. In what way did Adam and Eve die the day that they sinned? _____

6. What three things were first referenced in Genesis 3:6?
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____

7. Define *sin*. _____

8. What was the greatest disaster to result from Adam and Eve's sin? _____

9. What is the basic root of sin? _____

10. What does selfishness lead to? _____

11. Sin is a refusal to do what? _____

12. What does sin result in? _____

13. What is the only way to eliminate the power of sin? _____

Personal Study Notes