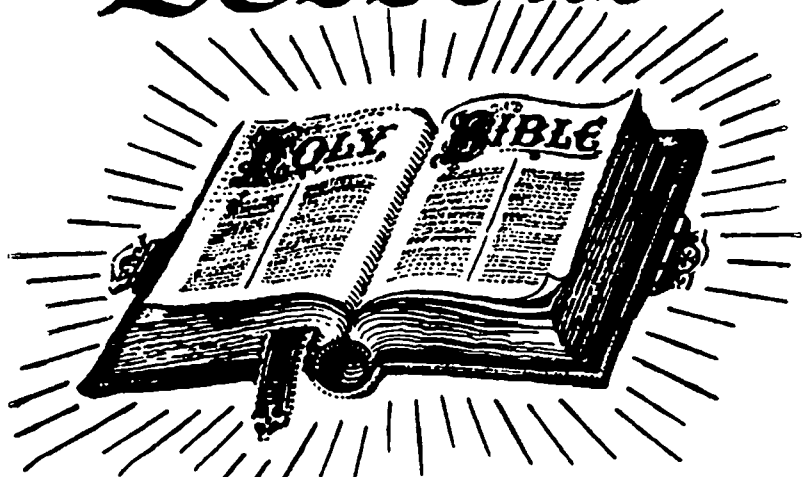


Bible Lessons



**Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord,
we are CHANGED” II Cor. 3:18**

ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE

**Vol. 6, No. 4
Oct., Nov., Dec.,
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Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

Vol. 6

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THEME FOR THE FOURTH QUARTER, 1974



The thirteen epistles, ascribed to the Apostle Paul in the New Testament, fall into four well-defined groups. The first epistles he wrote were to the Church of God in Thessalonica. The first and second books of Thessalonians were written from Corinth to them when Paul was on his second missionary journey.

The town of Thessalonica was at the head of a gulf, and much commerce both by sea and land flowed through it. Paul knew that the city had many Jews and that sin abounded in that city. Fresh from their terrible beating and the dungeon of Philippi, Paul and Silas arrived with their friend, Timothy, in Thessalonica. When some accepted the message of truth, it was a signal for the outbreak of Jewish hatred. Amidst the turmoil, a Church of God congregation was raised up. Paul's being there provoked more persecutions, so he left the infant congregation to one who would care for it and went on his way.

We have for our lessons the two letters that he wrote to them which are filled with his care, concern and love for them.

Our last three lessons are about the birth of our blessed Saviour.

—Sister A. Marie Miles

October 6, 1974

RESULTS OF THE POWERFUL GOSPEL OF CHRIST

Acts 17:2-4; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Acts 17:2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them [synagogue in Thessalonica], and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,

3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

1 Thess. 1:1. [Paul writes letter] Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;

3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

4 Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:

7 So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.

9 For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;

10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

Memory Verse: For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. Romans 1:16.

Central Thought: The effect of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is to change the hearts of men from vanity and sin to serve the living God and to prepare them to be ready when Jesus comes again.

Word Definitions: Gospel means "good news." Followers of us means "imitators." Silvanus means Silas. Timotheus

means Timothy. Ye were ensamples means "type" or the Thessalonians were clearly stamped as children of God.

LESSON BACKGROUND

First Thessalonians is the first epistle or letter that the Apostle Paul wrote in the New Testament.

Some believed the gospel story, but the "Jews believed not." The acceptance of the gospel by some was a signal for the outbreak of Jewish hatred against Jesus Christ and Paul. "They drew Jason and certain brethren into the city, crying; These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also: whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus." Acts 17:6, 7. Out of this revolution came the birth of many into the Church of God in Thessalonica. Paul and Silas had to leave the city, but others took care of the infant church, and it grew.

Our lesson includes the letter that the Apostle Paul wrote to the Church of God in Thessalonica.

QUESTIONS:

1. Name the three things mentioned that Paul opened and alleged out of the Scriptures to the people of Thessalonica. 2. What were the three things about these brethren that Paul remembered while he was praying for them? 3. In what and with what did they receive the Word? 4. How far reaching was their faith? 4. What effect did the gospel have upon these people's lives?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Paul reasoned with those who gathered in the synagogue of the Jews out of the Scriptures. He endeavored to open to their understanding that Christ had suffered and died for our sins, and that He was the very Christ, risen from the dead triumphant and sitting at the right hand of God. This was an entirely different doctrine from the cold legalistic way of the law of Moses and the ordinances of the Old Testament. This was a new and a living way. It brought a great change in the hearts of those who were persuaded that what Paul taught was true and who believed it with all their hearts. It turned them from idols to serve the living God. It brought them into an attitude of faith and patience and hope, waiting for the Son of God to appear in glory.

Do we realize that the gospel will have the same powerful effect now if people will but believe it as it really is? Yes, it surely will. We have many idols in the land. These idols are

not images carved with human hands, but they are idols of a much more deceitful sort. Any profession of faith or religion that does not bring spiritual life into the person who believes such, is an idol. Any thing that man attaches his heart to that is not inspired and motivated by pure divine love and the Holy Spirit becomes an idol. Many people worship pleasure and excitement. Many worship financial gain and money. Many worship style and fashion and worldly honour and admiration. These are all idols and the effect of the gospel is to show up these things that they are idols and are to be denied and turned away from. Many churches and religious movements of today, when scrutinied by the burning of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, turn up to be nothing but idolatry. People worship their doctrine, their church, their way of doing things instead of God in His living reality. Many worship the preacher and will take his word above what thus saith the Lord. Such are thus because they do not believe nor hear the real gospel. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. Beware of idolatry, my friend, and seek this new and living way wherein you will find the true communion with God.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

We notice that the Apostle Paul did not hold himself up above Sylvanus (Silas) or Timotheus (Timothy). Each man had his talents, distinctive individuality and special mode of working; but there was an emphatic unity of purpose which brought about results. This surely was a lesson to the Thessalonian Church as well as to us today. They had a lesson of confidence and unity by the harmonious example of their teachers. They brought to them the fullness of the gospel which contained and offered all the blessings that can enrich and ennoble a man. The gospel was given to them in power and "not in word only." The gospel must be received in power. There must be in each hearer a strong, deep, faith-compelling conviction—a conviction of the awful truth and saving power of the gospel. Through feeling this deep conviction, it brings an urge to a course of conduct in harmony with that conviction. The results of receiving the gospel will fill the mind with pure and lofty thoughts, turn the current of feelings into the right channel and make the soul to be filled with hopes, and changes the sin-stricken nature into the perfection of the divine. Yet, all of this will not accomplish complete and full salvation unless the Holy Spirit power does the work of spiritual reformation upon the soul.

We note that the Apostle Paul said that the Thessalonians "received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy

Ghost." The combination of joy and sorrow was present amid the tumult and persecution of the citizens (Acts 17:5-9), and with joy they received a consciousness of forgiveness and acceptance with God. Thank God for that joy that comes from above! It is something that the angels cannot enjoy. The joy of triumph over error, sin, Satan and persecutions is a special product of the Holy Ghost. This joy is something that cannot be kept. The Apostle Paul told the Thessalonians that the word of the Lord sounded out from them and in every place their faith to God was spread abroad. May God help us each one to be faithful, so the light of God can shine forth from our lives.

—M. Miles

NOT LONG TO LIVE

I was born April 10, 1943 in a small town in West Virginia. At this writing my age is 30 and I am dying. The doctors all say I must die. For many years I didn't and wouldn't accept it. I have always had an awesome horror of death, but not any more.

First, I realize that each day must be lived as a life, for I'm not sure that I'll be here tomorrow. I also realize that at the ending of each day is the beginning of another day—closer to the grave.

I used to be a very heavy smoker and I drank to the point of alcoholism. I was very, very bitter about life and toward people. I even became involved with Spiritism and Satan Worship for almost two years. I was unable to talk without the use of profanity, and the list could go on—but, enough. NOW my life has been changed! EVERY bit of my past filth, perversion and guilt feelings are gone!

Now I hate no one, nor do I have bitterness. What has caused this change? I have been BORN AGAIN! Yes, it's true. I've actually been born twice. How, you ask? Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3:3, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." So I have asked and received the Lord Jesus Christ into my heart and life. Now I have been born into the family of God. "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the son of God." (John 1:12). So this makes me a new man with a new attitude and outlook on life. "BECAUSE, if any man be in Christ he is a NEW creature: old things are passed away; behold, ALL things are become new." (2 Cor. 5:17). Maybe your past is nothing like mine, maybe it is a lot worse. That makes no difference because the doctors will tell you, too, that you can't live forever! You, too, must die, and life is short, so YOU DON'T HAVE LONG TO LIVE. Your past can be wiped away.

Remember a Christian is born TWICE and dies ONCE, but a sinner is born once and dies TWICE. "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the SECOND DEATH." (Rev. 20:14). Think about life—it's short!! No, you really don't have long to live. "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away." (James 4:14). —David Bowling

October 13, 1974

THE ENTRANCE OF THE GOSPEL

1 Thessalonians 2:1-13

1 Thess. 2:1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain:

2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.

3 For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:

4 But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness:

6 Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.

7 But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:

8 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

9 For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.

10 Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:

11 As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children,

12 That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

Memory Verse: How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things. Romans 10:15.

Central Thought: The gospel is preached in the spirit of meekness and power through the avenue of pure and holy lives of godly, faithful saints.

Word Definitions: "Was not in vain" means, we might say, it had something in it. "Was not of deceit, nor uncleanness, nor guile," we might say, Paul did not use any "dirty tricks" in the way of presenting or giving the gospel to cause souls to be saved. He did not bait any hooks for unwilling souls. "Trieth the hearts" would mean that God made manifest what is in man's heart.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We want to remember that the Apostle Paul is writing this to the church at Thessalonica, yet it is good for us today. He mentions having come to them from Philippi. You can read how he was treated at Philippi in Acts 16. There, he and Silas were beaten and put in prison. But at midnight they prayed, and God sent an earthquake, which opened the doors of the prison. The jailer was saved, and when the rulers found out that they were Roman citizens they begged them to leave the city. But we know that their mistreatment only deepened their love for God and the gospel. Now since you have the background of our lesson you can understand the sincerity in which Paul proclaimed the gospel.

QUESTIONS:

1. When Paul spoke the gospel, who was He seeking to please? 2. What was it that Paul counted a sacred trust from God committed to him? 3. How was Paul's conduct among these people while preaching the gospel? 4. What else was Paul willing to impart unto them beside the gospel of Christ?

5. What was their attitude toward the Word that Paul preached unto them?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The gospel of Christ to be effectual must be preached by men and women with clean, holy, and pure lives. Their conduct and actions must reflect the honour and majesty of the high and holy message that they are bearing to the souls of men. There must be no deceit, guile, uncleanness, or covetousness to stain the sacred oracles of God. A person's life and actions preach a much louder message than what he may thunder out over the pulpit. Oh, it is a high and holy calling to follow, and who is sufficient for such things in one's own strength? One who preaches the gospel is handling valuable material and is dealing with valuable material. It is a very serious and responsible place to fill. But if we are humble and willing for God to have His way, He is able to help us make the grade.

Notice the many things Paul said concerning the ministry God had given to him that he had ministered to these people. He was bold and he spoke with much contention. He had just come from Philippi where he had met much opposition. He counted the gospel as a sacred trust committed to him of God. He rejected the use of flattering words, nor was the gospel to be any gain to him personally except in its spiritual reward. He sought not the glory of men or of those to whom he preached, and yet he sought not to be a burden to them either. He exercised great gentleness in their midst, nursing them to the heights and depths of God. Those to whom he preached were very dear to him and he was willing to lay down his life for their welfare. He behaved himself holily, justly, and unblameably before them. He fathered them in the gospel of Christ and charged them to walk worthy of God and His kingdom.

Dear reader, does not this lesson challenge your soul? Let us seek God for His heavenly likeness to be imprinted upon our character so that our work for Him will not be in vain. Let the word and message we uphold be backed with the righteous attitude and spirit that Paul manifested in His life.

—L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The Apostle Paul referred the Thessalonians to his former persecutions as a proof that He loved God and their souls more than his own life. All that is done profitably for God must be done through sacrifice. Our deliverance from sin cost

our Lord and Saviour much suffering, yet we are told that "for the joy that was set before Him (Jesus), He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." Heb. 12:2-4.

Love is the great master-power of the preacher and the saints who are telling the gospel story. We must have such a love that we would be gentle to others as a mother is to her child. How quick the mother is to draw the child to her bosom when she has spoken quickly and that little lip turns up and a cry of hurt is heard! Oh, she doesn't want to hurt that sensitive spirit. She wants to comfort and sustain that child. Through her love, she can train it to love her. Through its love for her, it will want to please her. Jesus wants us to love Him with such a deep love that we will not want to displease Him. Only that kind of love will be acceptable to Him.

There is power in the gospel. It caused violent opposition at times. The way we are to meet that opposition is through prayer. Our weapons are not carnal, but mighty through God. "And the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves." Gentleness is fostered by a deep, self-sacrificing love which guides it. May God help us to seek often for the gentleness of Christ. —M. Miles

A CLEAN SLATE

"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins. . . ." Isaiah 44:22.

What happened to the old-fashioned slate and wet sponge of my early school days? When I was just a lad we did not use paper, pencil, or pen, but all of us had a slate in our little desk with a slate pencil. The thin piece of slate was framed with cloth-covered strips of wood. Hanging on a string from the corner of the desk was a wet sponge with which to erase what we had written. Teacher's pet had the privilege of wetting the sponges. How thankful I was for that sponge. It saved me from embarrassment more than once when the teacher walked over as the pupils began to giggle at what I had drawn on the slate! But enough of that. It was all brought back by a little story I heard today.

A little boy had been reading his Bible and came to his mother and said, "Mom, I don't understand this verse, 'I will blot out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions.' What does God mean? How can He do that?" The wise mother said,

"Bring me your slate on which you wrote a moment ago." When he brought it, there was nothing written on it. Mother said, "I know you wrote something on the slate a moment ago, but it is gone. Where is it now?" The lad looked puzzled for a moment; then he replied, "I don't know where it went, but it is gone because I rubbed it out." "But where is it? It was there a moment ago." "It was all wiped away; it doesn't exist any more." So, too, God erases our whole sinful past by the washing of the water of regeneration. I don't know where it went, but it's GONE!" And so that wise mother taught her son a little of the wondrous meaning of God's redeeming grace.

What a wondrous message in God's Word!

My sins are blotted out, I know!

If I trust in His redeeming blood,

My sins are blotted out, I know!

God's perfect eraser for our sins was furnished in the
"water and the blood" at Calvary. —Selected



October 20, 1974

ENDURING PERSECUTION FOR THE GOSPEL

1 Thess. 2:14-20; 3:1-8

1 Thess. 2:14 For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews:

15 Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men:

16 Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

17 But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.

18 Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.

19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

20 For ye are our glory and joy.

3:1 Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;

2 And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:

3 That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.

4 For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

5 For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.

6 But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you:

7 Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith:

8 For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.

Memory Verse: Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for their's is the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:10.

Central Thought: It is a great joy to a minister of the gospel to see those who believe and hold steadfast faithfully following the Lord despite the tribulation and persecution that they suffer.

Word Definitions: Contrary to all men: antagonistic, or opposing. Persecute: to expel or pursue out.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Persecution comes from men and women who do not understand the heavenly way and who oppose those who seek to walk therein. Persecution is hard to bear at times, and those who suffer persecution many times need special comfort and encouragement. Despite the welcome and reception that some gave the truth at Thessalonica, there were those who opposed it to their own destruction and heaped persecution on those who obeyed the gospel. Paul endeavors to bring comfort to those who were endeavoring to be faithful.

QUESTIONS:

1. What was it that filled up the sins of the Jews always and caused the wrath of God to come upon them to the uttermost? 2. In what way did the Thessalonians become followers of the Church of God in Judea? 3. Who did Paul say was his hope, joy and crown of rejoicing? 4. What did Paul say that we as children of God are appointed unto? 5. What was the thing that brought comfort to Paul's heart in all his affliction?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Jesus, in one of His parables, spoke of the gospel seed falling upon stony ground from which the seed sprang up quickly, but when persecution and tribulation arises for the Word's sake the person is offended. One of the great tests of a true Christian is found in what he suffers for what he believes. If something is not worth suffering for, it is not worth very much. If a person cannot give up the world, he is not worthy of the Lord. And if they cannot endure the contradiction of the world after they have given it up, they are not worthy of Him, either. There always has been and always will be those who resist the call of God and count themselves unworthy of everlasting life. Such make it hard for the true believers, but it only tends to prove the heart of those who really love the Lord. Many would like to enjoy what salvation has to offer, but when it comes to paying the price to get ahold of it, they are few and far between that are willing to pay it.

Sooner or later, the Lord is going to permit us to suffer for His name's sake. It is but for one purpose, and that is to make the riches of salvation more precious to us and to glorify His name in us. As we endure the scoffs and derision of the blinded souls who will not yield to Christ, great joy will be ours; and also, those who have preached the gospel to us will be filled with joy also. It is the fruit that God gives us in the hearts and lives of others that really gives us joy and rejoicing. Is this not proven to be so? Just think what a new-born baby brings in the way of joy and happiness to a home. So it is with the Church of God. A new member of the family of God is an incentive to any congregation. But the joy is greatly magnified if the new born soul triumphantly cleaves to the Lord despite great opposition and suffering. Yes, we are going to taste the bitter cup that Christ once drank for us. But as our faith stands firm, and we earnestly endeavor to follow the Lord despite all opposition of Satan,

the influence of our faithfulness will spread abroad, and other lives will be blessed.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In verse three it speaks of those afflictions "that we are appointed thereunto." We might wonder about this statement. But each of us will suffer for Christ's sake. Each of us have different trials, temptations and persecutions or problems to face. Some might have severe trials from their children, some from their parents, some from those at work, some from relatives, some from their wives, some from their husbands, some from bodily afflictions, some from their neighbors, etc. On and on grows the list through whom we might be touched. Each of us is going to be tempted and tried in this life. We might as well expect that. And as our lesson tells us; we should not be moved by them. But the one thing we must do, through all of these things, is to guard our faith and confidence in God. That was one thing the Apostle Paul was so concerned about the Thessalonians. He mentioned how he had told them they would suffer tribulation, and then he said, "When I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain." We must guard our faith, and know that we must trust God's wisdom as well as His power.

Oh, I know that the troubles will come thick and fast at times. It will bring us to tears, and we may become weary and faint with it all. We look at the person through whom it comes. We are tempted to blame them, and then the devil is there to try to work in some ill feeling toward that person. But we must not fight the person through whom the trial is coming, but we must resist the devil. He is the bottom of it all. We are to pray for those who spitefully use us. When we place the proper cause for the trouble, then we know what weapons to use. We are told in the Word to "put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." So we need to have plenty of peace, faith, righteousness, truth, the Word of God, and prayer to fight the devil with. Remember we are not fighting against "flesh and blood," so we "do not war after the flesh." "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" that the devil has tried to build up around us. Thank God, we can be "more than conquerors through Christ" who gives us the victory. —M. Miles

LETTING THE CAT OUT OF THE BAG

"He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand."
Hosea 12:7

The natural man is not to be trusted, for his "heart is deceitful above all things." (Jer. 17:9). He has a bag full of tricks; therefore, many a clever salesman makes a fortune by misrepresentation.

The expression "buying a pig in a poke" describes an ancient practice. A poke is a pouch or a bag in which the article for sale is hidden. An unwary customer at the market would be tricked into buying a suckling pig in a burlap sack, only to find that the bag contained a big tomcat instead! Hence, the use of the term to denote deceitfulness or the foolishness of obtaining something "sight unseen." It reminds one of the story in Genesis 27, how Jacob succeeded in deceiving his father by covering himself with goat skins so as to resemble his "hairy" brother. Isaac, being blind, was thus sold a "pig in a poke." But it wasn't long before Esau came and "let the cat out of the bag" by uncovering the deception.

Yes, selling a "pig in a poke" is an old trick. Satan, the great deceiver, was the first one to put it into practice. He promised mother Eve that he had something wonderful in his bag, which God had not revealed to her. His description of this bargain was very appealing: "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, a tree to be desired to make one wise, she made the bargain. And then God came and, so to speak, let the "cat out of the bag" when He pronounced the curse upon them, and drove them out of the Garden to die.

The Devil still has his old bag of tricks and lies. Your only safety is to listen to God—hear what He has to say in His Word. The less you know about what God has said, the easier it will be for the Devil to get you to believe his lies!

The Devil would sell you a "pig in a poke,"

And tell you that "sin is a lark!"

But the Scripture reveals that such pleasures are vain,

And will leave your poor soul in the dark!

As in business, so in the spiritual realm, this advice is always good: don't buy anything in the dark—examine it in the light!

—Selected

October 27, 1974

THE CALL TO THE GOSPEL OF HOLINESS

1 Thess. 3:12, 13; 4:1-12

1 Thess. 3:12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:

13 To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

4:1 Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.

2 For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.

3 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:

4 That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;

5 Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God.

6 That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.

7 For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.

8 He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.

9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

10 And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;

11 And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;

12 That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.

Memory Verse: Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Heb. 12:14.

Central Thought: The will of God for every one is to be sanctified and to walk in holiness and purity before God and man.

Word Definitions: **Holiness:** Sacredness, moral and religious purification, sanctification, consecration. The two words "holiness" and "sanctification" come from the same Greek word. **Fornication:** unlawful indulgence by either male or female. God designs that we control the desires of our bodies in holiness and sacred honour. **Honour:** worth, value, esteem, dignity. **Concupiscence:** a longing especially for that which is forbidden. **Defraud:** To be covetous, to over reach, to take advantage of.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The ways of God are so much different from the ways of men and the world. Even after a person has believed in Christ, much guidance and counsel is needed to direct one in the way of the Lord. Paul is holding forth the truth of sanctification to these brethren. He wants them to follow the Lord and not the way of those around them. We see this as a mainstream of the New Testament doctrines. God is calling us to holiness. He wants every person who serves Him to be a partaker of His holiness. Paul urges these brethren to so yield to the Lord that their hearts and lives may be established unblameable in holiness before God.

QUESTIONS:

1. In the light of our lesson, can sin and disobedience be tolerated in the life of a saint? 2. Who should our love increase and abound toward? 3. How do you associate the two terms "sanctification" and "honour"? 4. How could we defraud our brother? 5. What are some of the things that "possessing our vessel" might involve?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Oh, the weight of the words of the scriptures in our lesson today! Think of these experiences of the life God is calling us to: "Love one toward another, and toward all men." "Our hearts established unblameable in holiness before God at the coming of Christ." "Ye ought to walk and to please God." "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." "How to possess our vessel in sanctification and in honour." "God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." "Study to

be quiet, and do your own business, and work with your hands, and walk honestly toward them that are without." Is not this a high calling? Do we dare be indifferent or careless about our response to this call? Where will we be in the great Judgment Day if we set at naught all this divine counsel? How diligent we should be to obey this truth and reap the blessings and benefits therefrom.

It is the will of God for us to be sanctified. Oh, how the devil hates that word and what it stands for. To be sanctified is to be made pure, holy, and all for God and His will. We are to present our bodies upon the altar of God as a living sacrifice as our reasonable service to receive the sanctifying fullness of the Holy Spirit. Then we are to walk according to that divine rule. We are to learn and know through the counsel and guidance of the Holy Spirit how we are to possess (use, keep, care for, guard, employ, etc.) our vessel according to God's pleasure and will. This term vessel can be applied to different things that make up our life and being. It can mean our bodies. We need to know how to clothe and keep our bodies in divine order. It can refer to your spiritual experience and profession, and how you should care for it and use it. It can refer to the marriage state of man in his care and holy behavior toward his wife and in like manner that of a wife toward her husband. Anything that in life we are made a steward over we must know how to handle and keep in sanctification and the honour of God. Is this not a high calling? And then as we possess our vessel and live in this world for God we must lead quiet and peaceable lives with all godliness and honesty.

—Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It is important that we have the Holy Spirit. God never intended for any of us to live only in a justified state. We are to walk in the light as it is flashed upon our pathway. If the Lord leads us and we do not follow, we will be walking behind light and will go into darkness.

Some might ask the question, how can a person have the sin principle in their hearts and be in God's Church? It is the same with a child who has not come to the years of accountability. The Bible tells us that a person is not held accountable for what he does not know or have light on. The Bible says that "sin is not imputed when there is no law." Rom. 5:13. Impute means "to charge; to ascribe to another." (Web. Dic.). So when a person is justified by faith, he is clear until the Lord makes him know that he needs to be filled with the Holy Spirit and be cleansed from that sin that passed on all men through the fall of Adam. It is a sin that can be cleansed only

by the Holy Spirit. We do not ask forgiveness for it. Sanctification means, "To cleanse a sinner from the pollution and to free from the power and dominion of sin, and endure him with a principle of holiness; thus, God by His Spirit sanctifies the elect, or true believers." 1 Cor. 6:11 (Cruden's Concordance). Webster's dictionary says, "Sanctify" means "to make free from sin; purify, to set apart as holy; consecrate." The Bible tells us that we are "sanctified by the Holy Spirit." Rom. 15:16. We also read about the Lord giving the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles. Peter referred to that event in these words, "And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith," when they had received the Holy Ghost. Acts 15:8, 9.

God's Word is written to be obeyed by those who have the power of the Holy Spirit working in them. So dear ones, if you do not have that power you need to ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit. Consecrate yourselves to Him, for He is "faithful . . . who will also do it." —M. Miles

A COWBOY'S LIFE STORY

The writer was born and reared in a very tough part of Montana, without any religious training. In fact, I was taught that there was no God, and that when a man died that was the end of him. My father chewed, smoked, swore, played cards, danced, gambled and drank some. All my associates were brought up just about as I, therefore we had no high ideals. I smoked at the age of nine, and drank beer at a still earlier age. By the time I reached my teens, I liked it so well that I got drunk a few times. At home I was taught to play cards; and when I reached my teens I gambled on a small scale, and, because card playing was so interesting to me, I would play the whole night through if I could find anyone to play with me. I could hardly carry on a conversation without using profane and filthy language. At the age of thirteen, because I was a good rider, and could read the brands well, I was hired by a cattleman as one of the main riders. I was then among the real wild westerners, and I went from bad to worse.

After five years of this wild and rough life I became a physical wreck.

I went away for my health and came in contact with some real Christians. Their lives appealed to me very much, although they did not talk to me about my soul or about my relation to God. Watching them, I was convinced there was a God, but I did not understand how to get to the place where these people seemed to be living. I thought it meant just quit everything that would be considered a detriment to man physically, mentally and morally, and resolve to live better. I had a

good idea as to what was degrading, but how to overcome the desire for these things was a hidden mystery to me. I was determined to give up most of my bad habits, but that did not bring happiness or health. On the contrary, I felt more miserable, and so I decided to leave Montana for Washington, where the climate was better, and where there were many other things we did not have in Montana.

After being in Washington for some months, and having an awful struggle to make ends meet, I finally decided if there was nothing more to life than to work, eat, drink, sleep and finally die, then be placed six feet under the sod, why continue to live? The "no God" teaching was taking hold of me again which said the grave ended man's life forever. If that slant to life was correct, why continue to endure trouble and misery such as I was passing through? So I decided to end it all by committing suicide, and began to make plans to that end. At the appointed time for that awful deed, something seemed to say, "Are you sure death ends all?" "Are you sure there is no God?" Well, I couldn't say or assure myself of either, therefore to die haunted me, yet I could not see a thing for which to live.

I had sought happiness in the various forms of pleasure and sin, but none of those satisfied, so then I quit my wild life and still I felt more miserable. I was in Hell on earth, but could not console myself with the thought of leaving this earth unprepared if there was life beyond the grave; I finally decided not to commit suicide with the hopes I should finally find out how to be happy and contented while living here. My brother, two years younger than I, had been in a similar condition, but was marvelously converted. He knew his sins were blotted out, and was exceedingly happy. At once he became very much concerned about me; then he brought the sweetest of all stories to me. In three day's time I caught such a vision of myself in the light of God's standard of right. I saw myself a poor wretched sinner, and I saw Jesus as One who so loved me. He gave His head to wear the crown of thorns for me; He gave His tongue to pray for me; His cheeks to be smitten for me; His shoulders to bear the burden for me; His back to be ploughed for me; His hands to the cruel nails for me; His dear feet to the cruel spikes for me; His precious blood to redeem me; Himself a ransom for me. This picture so captivated my wicked and troubled heart, that I was melted and became as a little child, and accepted Jesus as my personal Saviour. My sinful heart was changed, I was made a new creature in Christ Jesus. Life looked mighty bright to me. I was free from all my transgressions!

In a few months after my brother and I were saved our dear mother was wonderfully saved. In less than four years my infidel father was marvelously converted under my humble ministry. Praise His name! Others in the family of nine children were also saved.

"Take the world, but give me Jesus."

Bad habits, worldly pleasures, bad language, and other sins are not even a temptation to me, for I have something so much better. Jesus satisfies every longing and stills every storm. Hallelujah!

—Herbert J. Ranton

November 3, 1974

THE HOPE OF THE GOSPEL

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; 5:2, 5-11

1 Thess. 4:13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

5:2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.

10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

Memory Verse: Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. Romans 15:13.

Central Thought: The hope of all who believe the gospel is to be accepted of the Lord in the day of His coming and to be caught up to meet Him in the air, thus ever to be with Him.

Word Definitions: Hope: anticipation, expectation, confidence. Archangel: a chief angel. Sober: to abstain from drunkenness (of any kind), to be discreet and watchful.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Paul in our lesson reminds the brethren of the hope we as the people of God have of future bliss and eternal happiness in the resurrection. The hope of the gospel meant much to the peoples of those times when sorrow and trouble were so often their great portion in this life. When the Christians displayed such confidence in the face of mortal destruction and death, it was a great witness to the people of that day. People had lost faith in their old gods, and in the Jewish system because it did not bring hope and confidence to their hearts. There is but one thing that will bring true hope to us and that is the grace of God in Jesus. Let us rejoice in this hope and abound therein that others may see and believe also.

QUESTIONS:

1. What hope do we have for loved ones who died in the faith? 2. What hope do we who are saved have for ourselves? 3. What three sounds will be heard at the coming of Christ? 4. Why will the coming of the Lord not be like a thief in the night to those who are saved? 5. In what way is faith and hope a breastplate, and in what way is the hope of salvation like a helmet? 6. What are the saved appointed for?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

What a blessed thought for meditation and study is the hope of the saints! Think of our dear loved ones who served the Lord so faithfully and for whom we wept when they departed. Is there any hope that we shall see them again? Yes, thank God, according to our lesson we shall see them again. Some think that we will not know our loved ones in glory, but to believe this dims the blessedness of our hope of seeing them again. Will they be some one else? Yes, they will come with Jesus, and we will be re-united with them in the air, forever to be with them and the dear Saviour who died for us. What a blessed hope is this!

In these verses we are informed of what will happen at the second coming of Christ. It is enough to warm our hearts with desire and fill us with purpose to be ready. When the Lord descends from heaven with a shout of triumph, and with the voice of the archangel rending the atmosphere, and with the trumpet of God raising the dead from their slumber beneath the sod, that great day for which creation has groaned and travailed for centuries will at last unfold to our view. Thank God, this day does not need to catch us unawares. If we are the children of light, having been enlightened with the truth of the gospel and walking in the light, we will not be ashamed but glorify God in that day. But, oh, think of the countless millions of souls slumbering in the night of sin, many so absorbed in the things of time and sense that they cannot be awakened. How sad for them when the Lord says, "Depart from me, I know ye not." Asleep and drunken in the night of sin, they had no time to prepare for eternity. Now it is too late as the great Judge ascends the throne of glory to mete out retribution. How diligently then we who are saved must be to make sure that we have faith, love, and hope. For it is not God's pleasure to condemn men and women, for He wills that all men receive His free gift of salvation. This is through Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, who died for us and rose again. Thus whether we are alive or whether we are passed on when He comes, it will make no difference for we shall live together with Him. Oh, what comfort these words are to our hearts!

—L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

We never know the day nor the hour that the Lord will call for us. Jesus has warned us that He would come as "a thief in the night." A thief comes when no one is expecting him or is watching. We do want to be on our guard and to watch and pray. We want to keep ready. If a person does

not go out suddenly, many times he is taken to a hospital, and when the doctor sees that he is going to die, he gives him a "shot" so he will not know about it. He goes out without a chance to get ready. God has called everyone to be saved. The call goes out to all. Whosoever will may come and take of the water of life freely. So it is up to us to make a move toward God. He never forces anyone to live for Him.

What a glorious hope we have in our souls of the resurrection! Our souls leave this body in death and are in paradise (or in "Abraham's bosom"), which means a place of rest. We are waiting for the Judgment day. When Jesus comes in the clouds of glory with ten thousands of His saints, we will arise with a new body and forever be with the Lord.

There will not be any time between Christ's coming and the final judgment. We read in 2 Tim. 4:1 that Jesus "shall judge the quick [living] and the dead at his appearing." So where will there be any time for that so-called thousand years' literal reign of Christ here on earth? It is just someone's imagination. They have twisted the Scriptures to make them read such things. We must rightly divide the Scriptures and put them in the place that God intended them to be. One man said that his child would be left here to endure great tribulations, as they call it, when he is caught up in what they call "the rapture." This is a false teaching. What terrible fantasy! When Jesus comes in the clouds, the dead in Christ and wicked dead will arise at the same time in a general, final resurrection. The righteous who are living at His coming will be changed to a glorified body in the twinkling of an eye, and together with the resurrected righteous, they will meet the Lord in the air to be forever with Him. All the wicked, those resurrected and those living, will be cast into the lake of fire to be tormented forever. We must live daily so we will be ready to meet our God.

—M. Miles

POSSESSIONS

Let me hold lightly things of this earth;
Transient treasures, what are they worth?
Moths can corrupt them—rust can decay;
All their bright beauty fades in a day.
Let me hold lightly temporal things
I, who am deathless; I who wear wings.
Let me hold fast, Lord, things of the skies,
Quicken my vision, open my eyes!
Show me Thy riches, glory and grace,
Boundless as time is, endless as space!
Let me hold lightly things that are mine—
Lord, Thou hast given me all that is Thine!

November 10, 1974

SANCTIFIED WHOLLY AND PRESERVED BLAMELESS

1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

1 Thess. 5:12 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;

13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.

14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.

15 See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.

16 Rejoice evermore.

17 Pray without ceasing.

18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

19 Quench not the Spirit.

20 Despise not prophesyings.

21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

22 Abstain from all appearance of evil.

23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

25 Brethren, pray for us.

26 Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.

27 I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.

28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

Memory Verse: For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified. Hebrews 10:14.

Central Thought: As we walk in the light of God's Word and faithfully follow His counsel, He has promised to sanctify us wholly and preserve us blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Word Definitions: Know them which labour among you: Acknowledge or recognize them with due honour and respect. Feeble-minded: Fainthearted (Greek). Pray without ceasing: Do not fail to pray; let not anything keep you from the spirit of prayer. Wholly: Entirely, through and through.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson is the closing of Paul's letter to these brethren that he loved so much in the Lord. He climaxes his letter with a final prayer and plea for their entire sanctification and preservation unto the coming of the Lord.

QUESTIONS:

1. Do you think that the commandments given by Paul in our lesson have anything to do with the promise of God sanctifying us wholly? 2. How much of us must be preserved blameless? 3. How many things commanded here have to do with our relationship with our fellowman? 4. Is it possible to give thanks in everything? 5. How can we pray without ceasing?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Our lesson today reveals one clear-cut route to the sanctifying grace of God. If we will faithfully follow all the commands lined up by Paul here, we can be assured that the God who called us to holiness will sanctify us wholly and we can and will be preserved blameless unto His coming. Thus, we are not only sanctified by the blood of Jesus (Heb. 13:12), but also we are sanctified through the washing of the water by the Word. (Eph. 5:26). There are some things that we must see about if we are to be blessed with the assurance of His sanctifying fullness.

Give some serious thought to each of these commandments here. We find in this, respect and honour for our elders, peace and harmony with other believers, merciful attitudes toward the unruly, feeble-minded (faint-hearted, Greek) and the weak, besides patience for all men, the principle of following that which is good always in all things with all people, rejoicing, praying, the giving of thanks, yielding to the Spirit of God, respect for preaching of the gospel, and a carefulness to the holding fast to the right and turning away from every form of evil. This is a high calling, and it behoves us to be diligent to consider and follow faithfully. If we will obey, we will eat the good of the land. God will faithfully fulfill His promise and send the Holy Spirit's power into our hearts and lives, preserving us and enabling us to live and work for Him.

Paul then asks for prayer. He valued the prayers of people who were following the Lord all the way. It is God's plan and will that we pray for one another. We who are in the same body are concerned with each other's needs and burdens of life. And then he exhorted the brethren to be greeted with an HOLY kiss. The kiss is a token of affection, and it is so precious to carry out in the love and fear of God. And then Paul desired that this letter be read to other saints, and I am sure it would please him to know that we of this day are also reading and appreciating the worthy instruction he gave in this epistle.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

We notice that when we are walking in the light we are not quenching the Spirit. God has flashed light on our pathway and we are walking in that light. We know we must give ourselves wholly unto the Lord, and we do that. We are obeying the Word of God by rejoicing and "in everything" giving thanks unto God. Notice that it says for us to give thanks "in everything." Only God can help us to do that. We know that suffering for Christ's sake causes us to be more like Christ, as we exercise ourselves rightly in the trial.

As we move on with the Lord and are filled with the Spirit, we want to walk continually in the Spirit. When the Spirit of God moves upon us to do something we want to do just that. We noticed in the recent campmeeting that the Spirit moved and souls moved to speak or act under the Spirit's direction. One night, different ones got up after they were moved upon by the Spirit of God and spoke for Him. It was a blessing and they were blessed. It did our souls good. Some were there at the meeting for the first time and they mentioned that they just didn't want the service to close. The Spirit touched this one's heart and then another one's heart. They moved and we rejoiced. Each day we want to move when God moves upon us. Maybe we will be doing our shopping in town and God will cause us to feel impressed to speak about the Lord in our conversations. We should obey the voice of the Spirit and the Lord will bless us and make us a blessing. We never know just how much good will be done. When the Spirit moves upon us to go to our closet and pray, we want to do that. You will find that the Lord will bless you and His name will be glorified.

—M. Miles

AN INFIDEL CONVERTED

A youth of sixteen entered college, and graduated with the highest honors of his class. His most intimate friend was

E.—, who was very bright and witty, and remarkably winning in his person and manners, but a confirmed infidel. The ambitious youth came fully under the influence of this gay and brilliant companion, and when he left college, he, too, could ridicule the Bible, and crack his jokes at the expense of weak minded (?) people who believe it to be the Word of God.

While traveling one evening he stopped at a country inn, and the landlord apologized for the necessity of putting him in the room adjoining an apartment occupied by a young man who was extremely ill, and in a dying condition. The youthful infidel smiled at the apology, for what was death to him? However, in the stillness of the night, he heard through the thin partition the groans of the sick man; groans of suffering; groans, it seemed to him, of despair. He was ashamed to find that these hollow and hopeless groans not only disturbed him, but also appalled him, and he covered his head with the bed clothes in profound mortification, when he reflected that the intellectual, wiley and sarcastic E— would laugh him to scorn if his weakness were discovered. At last all was still, and he fell into an uneasy sleep.

When he awoke, descending to the office with an assumed indifference, he inquired after his fellow roommate. "Dead," was the blunt reply of the landlord. The infidel was startled, but again asked in a careless tone: "Do you know who he was?" "Oh, yes, he was a graduate of P.— College, and a fine fellow. His name was E—, and it's a pity he died so young, for he would have made his mark."

And so the groans that made the young stranger think of E— as a refuge from his unmanly fears, were groans of E— himself, the wicked deist in his dying hour. This young skeptic afterwards became the devoted and distinguished Adoniram Judson, the great missionary to Burma.

November 17, 1974

TOUCH NOT GOD'S ANOINTED

2 Thess. 1:3-6; Matt. 18:6, 7, 10; 2 Thess. 1:7-12

2 Thess. 1:3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;

4 So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:

5 Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:

6 Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

Matt. 18:6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

7 Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!

10 Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

2 Thess. 1:7-12 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,

8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;

10 When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

11 Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power:

12 That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Memory Verse: Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm. Psa. 105:15.

Central Thought: It is a serious thing to persecute God's children. God's justice requires "everlasting destruction" of the ungodly for their rejection of Christ and for the persecution of a man, for no other reason, but that he has given himself fully to God.

Word Definitions: "To be admired" means to "marvel at." "Rest" really means "the slackening of strings that had been pulled tight, or the relaxing of tensions."

LESSON BACKGROUND

"This epistle was written a short time after the former; and as Silas and Timothy were still at Corinth, the apostle joins their names with his own, as in the former case."

This epistle was written about 52 A. D. to the Church of God at Thessalonica.

In 1 Thess. 2:14 we learn that the Thessalonians had suffered much persecution from their own countrymen and also from the Jews. We note that down through the ages, persecutions have never essentially injured the Church of God.

The words, "your faith groweth exceedingly," does not occur again in the New Testament. It means "to increase beyond measure." Their faith was like the "fruitful bough by a fountain whose branches ran over the wall," though "the archers have sorely grieved" it, and "shot at" it and persecuted it. Gen. 49:22, 23. A living faith can only be sustained by a living truth. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life." Where there is life, there will be growth. If our beliefs are on the wrong track, our life is a mistake and our energies are wasted. The Thessalonians had a real faith. It was vivid and deep-rooted in the quickening soil of the gospel truth. Praise God for that kind of faith which we can have today!

—M. Miles

QUESTIONS:

1. What are the results of an intelligent and active faith in the truth? 2. Is suffering for Christ's sake a sign of God's displeasure upon us or a means of spiritual prosperity? 3. Is it a serious thing for a person to persecute one of God's little ones? 4. What will happen to those who turn against God and His people? 5. What will be done in the day of judgment?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

One morning I read these verses in our lesson in 1 Thessalonians. The verses that stood out to me were the 6th, 7th and 9th. I thought how terrible it will be for those who persecute God's children. Instead of feeling ill toward those who cause us to suffer, a pity filled my heart. Surely it will be an awful thing to be banished from God, in hell with the devil and his angels. There will be such a terrible torment and suffering that it is impossible to describe. Then I thought what we will enjoy in heaven, if we prove faithful through the perse-

cutions here in this life. There we will be in the "presence of the Lord" and "the glory of His power." "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." 1 John 3:2. To-day we are melted in tears of thanksgiving to Jesus for His great love for us in dying for our sins. Dear ones, over there we will fully know the glory that He had with His Father before He came to this world. We then can truly glorify and honor Him. He will "be admired in all them that believe."

Later that day I wrote to a Sister to encourage her and used some of these scriptures. Then Bro. Leslie Busbee came to the office and we discussed what should be written for this lesson. We decided to put in the words of Jesus between verses 6 and 7 about the seriousness of offending one of God's little ones: They each have a guardian angel who is watching them. God is taking note. Everyone will have to stand before God in that Judgment day. They will meet all the things they have done. Christ will come "in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God." What a terrible day that will be for them!

The evening of that same day we went to prayer meeting. Sister Lottie Porter arose and read these scriptures. She was also touched with verses 6 and 7. She brought out how we need to watch our own hearts and not have any ill feelings toward those who persecute us, but to love them. She then exhorted us to have a burden for the lost. In tears she told us to pray for the lost who are bound by Satan. They are facing a terrible doom.

The persecution of the Church is the proof that it is the true Church. The church is persecuted, not because they have done anything wrong, but because the Spirit of Christ is in them.

—M. Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The superficial observer seems to think that all of the world's great prizes, such as wealth, social status, great honor, pleasure and happiness, are lavished upon the wicked in great abundance while the God-fearing few have to struggle on in obscurity, hardships and penury. But when we, who are God's children, look at the whole situation, we can see something that is a greater prize than the things of this world. We look at the eternal future of the faithful. We know that God will recompense them for all they have endured in this world in such a glorious manner that in comparison the pleasures that the world can give will seem to be nothing. Then when we think of the punishment of the wicked, which our lesson de-

scribes, we do not want to have any part with them. Sometimes, as we look at the sufferings of the righteous, it is hard to reconcile that with the goodness and justice of God, but all things come in their turn to the patient, righteous man.

The people of the world, who are motivated by the spirit of the devil, are violently opposed to the Church, and that opposition is full of deep-seated hatred and cruelty. In order to maintain the truth it often entails suffering. Verse five refers to "the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer." The devil is trying to kill the life of Christ out of every heart. Herod tried to kill the baby Jesus. But God protected that life. It was a great trial to Mary and Joseph to have to go down into Egypt, but the devil was after that life. (Matt. 2:13,14). When you are in deep trial and the devil tries to get you to look at the person or thing that the suffering is coming through, you must look past that and see the devil trying to kill the Christ-life out of your soul. Fight the devil with the weapons God has given us. Those weapons are prayer, love, peace, and victory through Christ, and they are "mighty through Christ to the pulling down of strong holds" that the devil has built up. 2 Cor. 10:4. "If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you," Jesus tells us. We can't acquire any worthiness by the merit of our own good works. Suffering causes us to meet the conditions which make us worthy or "counted worthy of the kingdom of God."

The Apostle Paul comforted the Church, and we are comforted by the assurance that a great day is coming which will be ushered in with awful splendor. The startling scenes of that day will bring a twofold reward. The mercy and glory will be rewarded to the faithful, but His wrath and punishment to the wicked. It will pay us to live today to live again in eternity with our Lord and Saviour.

—M. Miles

"RESIST NOT EVIL" BUT RESIST THE DEVIL

(Matthew 5:39)

(1) For instance: You are unjustly afflicted by some person. He hates and despises you, he mocks you, he offends you, tells lies about you, and thus ruins your good reputation by his evil speaking; he accuses you wrongfully and thus heaps much suffering and sorrow on you. Maybe that person has power over you—political or financial; he is instrumental in dismissing or discharging you from your good and favorite employment, not for your evil-doing, but simply because he does not like you or he resents your religious conviction. (Remark: Fear not, the Lord has in store for you a much better job. "Only cease from anger and forsake wrath; fret not

thyself in any wise to do evil." Read Psalms 37:1-8 and Mark 10:28-30). If your enemy uses his authority and takes the things which legally belong to you, "resist him not," but give them to him gladly.

The Lord says, "And if any man will sue thee at law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." (Matt. 5:40). If he prepares for you financial or some other loss, and thus humbles you unjustly in the sight of other people and does many wrong and evil things that grieve your heart and mind—"Resist not that person." Simply, let him alone, and regularly pray for him; that is all you have to do. Be sure the Lord is your defense (Psa. 94:22-23). "For it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." (Rom. 12:19).

(2) In such a situation you are often inwardly tempted to use your human rights and powers and all other means you have at your disposal to defend yourself and your just case and show and prove your guiltlessness and your righteousness, and to let other people know that you have been accused wrongfully and you suffer unjustly.

(3) This is the outward line on your battlefield, and forget not the Lord's command "That ye resist not evil." (Matt. 5:39; 27:12-14). Resist not that person, neither with sword nor use any other means to defend yourself; but in prayer on your knees commit your outward adversary into the hands of the Lord, and leave him there by faith, waiting patiently for the Lord's help and direction. (Psa. 37:5-8). Then pray regularly every day in this manner: Lord, lay not this sin to his charge; Father, forgive him; O God, fill my heart with perfect love that suffereth long, beareth all things, hopeth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things. Then read and be doers of God's Word: Acts 7:60; Luke 23:34; 1 Cor. 13:1-13. That is what you have to do.

(4) Now, what you do not have to do: Do not talk about your adversary with other people; do not tell them about all the evil your enemy has done to you; do not even think over and over again about all the wrong and evil things that person grieved you and broke your heart with. In remembering and repeating those bitter experiences, you make your own heart bitter and vex your own spirit, and tear open again the old wounds in your own heart and spot your own mind. Through repeating those evil things you grieve the Holy Ghost in your own soul, and quench the peace of God and the joy of the Holy Spirit in your heart. Thus, ignorantly, you open the door for the devil in your own life, and give him a new chance to draw your own soul into some other sin.

Any hidden bitterness in your heart against some other person will produce some unexpected trouble in your own home,

your family or at your place of work, or even in your own body and your spirit; physical infirmities, sickness in your nerves, head, stomach or somewhere else, and darkness of your spiritual sight. Read and consider well Heb. 12:15, James 3:14-18; Prov. 4:20-22. Exercise yourself to let your enemy alone. Train yourself not to be sad or fret, but rather, praise the Lord that you have the privilege to suffer for righteousness' sake, like Jesus suffered: that you may have a part in the suffering of Christ. Read often Rom. 8:17; 1 Peter 4:12-16; Luke 6:22-23 and 1 Peter 2:19-23. That is the right Bible stand (attitude) concerning this command of God's, "But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil." (Matt. 5:39).

(5) A remark: In many cases, God's people afflict each other in their ignorance, for lack of knowledge of God's Word (Hosea 4:6). In such a case, you may talk to your adversary in the spirit of perfect love, of course, and warn him of his wrong step against you. If he hears and is willing to accept your warning and obey, then you have converted one of your fellow-Christians from the error of his way, and have saved a soul from spiritual death. Read James 5:19-20. If he stubbornly and willfully resists your brotherly advice and rejects your warning, let him alone. Commit him unto the Lord in your prayer and patiently bear your unjust sufferings and praise the Lord. "For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully (1 Peter 2:19). For all unjust sufferings or suffering for righteousness' sake is assured (guaranteed) "a great reward in heaven." Read Matt. 5:10-12. If you can do nothing else for the Lord Jesus, but suffer, be hated, misunderstood; reproached, persecuted and cast away as a fool and as the filth of the world, perhaps even physically killed, be sure in heaven there is laid up for you "a great reward." (1 Cor. 4:9-13 and Luke 6:22-26).

(6) Now, in conclusion, maybe you are interested to know what will befall your enemy who wrongfully afflicted you and outwardly got a seeming victory over you. Be sure, your adversary is the actual loser of the battle, but you are the winner. If he will humble himself and repent and honestly confess his error, the Lord will forgive him and lift him up. But if he will not do that, then be sure, one day his sin will find him out, "for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." That evil that he had planned and realized against you shall return upon his own head, at the time and place he never expected. For it is written, "His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate." The pit he had digged for you, he himself shall fall into it. Read Numbers 32:23; Gal. 6:7-8; Psalms 7:15-16.

But you, through fulfilling the royal law of God's love (James 2:8), have delivered your own soul from destruction, and have preserved the peace of God and the joy of the Holy Spirit in your own heart, and become richer, stronger and wiser in the Lord. That is godly victory. "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil." (Matt. 5:39). —K. I.

November 24, 1974

THE MAN OF SIN

2 Thess. 2:1-4; Rev. 13:1a, 2b, 5-8, 18; Col. 2:18.

2 Thess. 2:1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,

2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

Rev. 13:1a And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast [Catholicism] rise up out of the sea.

2b And the dragon [Paganism] gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.

6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them; and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred three-score and six.

Col. 2:18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.

Memory Verse: For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. Matt. 24:5.

Central Thought: Before Christ would come the second time, a great falling away would take place in the professed Christian Church, and a great power of deception would arise and deceive many souls, and this took form in the powers of the Pope of Rome and the Roman Catholic Church.

Word Definitions: The Greek word "apostasy" is translated "a falling away" in our lesson. The word "blasphemy" in the Greek means: vilification against God. "Vilification" means to make vile; debase, degrade; also to cheapen; to render less valuable; to hold in lower esteem. Surely this is what the Catholic Church and every other false church does which denies the Spirit of God the power and right to function, guide, and operate.

LESSON BACKGROUND

It seems very evident that many early Christians thought that Christ was to immediately appear the second time and bring this world to a close. But the Spirit of the Lord revealed to Paul, and he now communicates it to the saints, that the coming of the Lord was not at hand as some were supposing. He saw clearly that there was to come a falling away first, and he could already see it beginning to take place. He makes a prophecy of the nature of the apostasy in the form of one who would exalt himself above God, turning the worship and glory that belongs to God toward himself.

Then from the Revelation of God to John we draw the vision of the beast rising up out of the sea (people), to whom was given a mouth speaking great blasphemies against God, His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. Oh, how the Roman Catholic Church in all its pomp and ceremony has fulfilled all of these things.

—Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why was Paul wanting to warn the brethren of the coming apostasy? 2. Can you think of anyone else in the Bible who was called the "son of perdition"? 3. In what way does the Catholic Church blaspheme God, His Church, and the saints? 4. In what way did Paganism give to Catholicism his power and authority? 5. How long was the Beast given power to continue?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The prophet Isaiah in 21:12 prophesied thus: "The morning cometh, and also the night." In one sense, this was fulfilled in what we have in our lesson. The morning Church shone forth the glory of the gospel ushering in the great day of Christ. The night and spiritual darkness began to creep forth over the nations and they were soon engulfed in the awful deception of Roman Catholicism. Paul prophesies of its rise here to the Thessalonians very pointedly while other New Testament writers warned of the coming apostasy also. Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples chosen of Jesus, was called by the Lord "the son of perdition." Judas yielded to Satan and he fell by transgression and purchased a field of iniquity. He lost his soul. Paul here terms this man of sin and the mystery of iniquity that was already working as the son of perdition also. This great falling away was to take place by the avenue of men and women who professed Christ and who at one time walked with Him. Their hearts failed to be steadfast with God and they fell from their holy estate. Yet they maintained their profession and went right along with a form of godliness. Thus, emerged the great deceptive, apostate church with a mortal man at the helm, one who called himself the Vicar of Christ, the Head of the Church, the Pope.

There can be no doubt that this is the beast that John saw rising out of the sea. He opened his mouth in blasphemy against God by turning the hearts of the people toward himself and against His tabernacle (Church) because of the erroneous doctrines he set forth blinding the eyes of the people; and against those that dwell in heaven by making gods out of departed souls and calling them, according to his decrees, saints. In many other ways the Pope of Rome is the symbol of spiritual darkness and apostasy. But, oh, how holy and great he thinks himself to be! How sad that mankind is so blinded as to suppose that such could have any connection with a holy and just God! But that is the power of deception, and how treacherous it is! May God fortify each one of us lest we be led away with the error of the wicked. —L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

We note in Rev. 13:17, 18, in speaking of the symbol of the beast, which is Catholicism, it says, "... the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six." We read in the book, "Revelation Explained," that the symbolic description of this beast directs us to a political and religious system which ruled at one time. As time went on, the political power was taken away from this system and the Pope of Rome doesn't have the power that he once had.

We note that the system of counting and numbering used before the tenth century was by the Roman numerals. Each letter of the alphabet was used to denote a number. The letters of I, V, X, L, C, D, and M each had the power to express a number. So the information given us in Revelations 13:18 is that the name of the man or the "number of the man" was six hundred and sixty-six. The Scriptures also point out that this particular man is called the "man of sin."

The Pope of Rome wears in jeweled letters upon his miter the following blasphemous inscription: "Vicarius Filii Dei"—which translated in English reads: "Vicar of the Son of God." Taking out of this name all the letters which the Latins used as numerals, we have the total number of six hundred and sixty-six. U and V were formerly used to denote five.

V—5, I—1, C—100, A—0, R—0, I—1, U—5, S—0, F—0, I—1, L—50, I—1, I—1, D—500, E—0, I—1. These numbers added make a total number of 666. —M. Miles

ROMAN CATHOLIC RELIGION VERSUS THE CATHOLIC BIBLE

Let us see what the new Catholic Edition of the Holy Bible says about the doctrinal teachings of the Roman Catholic religion.

This religion teaches that man must confess his sins to a priest or the virgin Mary, who are claimed to be mediators between man and God, but the Catholic Bible says, "There is one God, and one mediator between man and God, Himself man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all." 1 Tim. 2:5, 6. "Jesus — because He continues forever — has an everlasting priesthood. Therefore, He is able at all times to save those who come to God through Him, since He lives always to make intercession for them." Hebrews 7:24, 25. "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given to man, by which we must be saved." Acts 4:12.

This precious Scripture tells us that we must come to God personally, through Christ only, and ask forgiveness in His name, and no other; for the Catholic Bible says, "To Him all the prophets bear witness, that through His Name all who believe in Him may receive forgiveness of sins." Acts 10:43. "Be it known therefore to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and in Him everyone who believes is acquitted." Acts 13:38, 39. "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." 1 John 1:7.

The Roman Catholic religion teaches that the ceremony of Mass is a repetition of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross to cover our sins; but the Catholic Bible says, "Every priest, indeed, stands daily ministering, and often offering the same sacrifice, which can never take away sins; but Jesus, having offered one sacrifice for sins, has taken His seat forever at the right hand of God. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are sanctified. Now where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer offering for sin." Heb. 10:11-14, 18. This scripture declares that there is no need for a repetition of the sacrifice of the cross, because the one sacrifice of Christ was perfect and complete, and God sanctified it, by raising Christ from the dead.

The Roman Catholic religion teaches that the ceremonies of Mass will free the souls of the dead from the fires of purgatory; but the Holy Bible says, "To depart and to be with Christ; which is far better." Phil. 1:23. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth, now, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours." Rev. 14:13. This scripture proves that the souls of believers do not go to a place of torment.

The Mass ceremonies in the Roman Catholic religion are not performed unless well paid for by its followers; but the Catholic Bible says, "You know that you were redeemed from the vain manner of life handed down from your fathers, not with perishable things, with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." 1 Peter 1:18, 19. This Scripture tells us that it is impossible to purchase our salvation, because Christ freely shed His precious blood to pay the full penalty of our sins: as it says in Matt. 20:28, "The Son of Man has not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." "He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we are healed." Isaiah 53:5.

Many may be following the Roman Catholic religion because they like to think they can sin all they want to, and still be able to ultimately obtain salvation, if they unfaithfully con-

fess all of their sins to a priest or the virgin Mary, and pay for enough Masses and Indulgences; but the Catholic Bible says, "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; he who is unbelieving toward the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests on him." John 3:36. Anyone who has repented toward God, and has been saved, does not desire to sin because he is born of God.

The Roman Catholic religion teaches that it is a sin for anyone to believe he is saved, but Christ says in the Catholic Bible, "Come unto Me, all you who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest." Matt. 11:28. "Jesus said to them, Amen, amen—I am the door—if anyone enter by Me, he shall be saved." John 10:7-9. He also said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow Me, and I give them everlasting life; and they shall never perish, neither shall anyone snatch them out of my hand." John 27:28. No one can be saved after death, as the Catholic Bible says, "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation." 2 Cor. 6:2. "This is the testimony, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life. He who has not the Son has not the life. These things I am writing to you that you may know that you have eternal life—you who believe in the name of the Son of God." 1 John 5:11-13. —D. G.

December 1, 1974

HEART DISHONESTY BRINGS DECEPTION

2 Thess. 2:7-13; Luke 8:15; Rom. 13:12-14; 1 Jno. 1:6, 7.

2 Thess. 2:7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.

9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Luke 8:15 But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

Romans 13:12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

13 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.

1 John 1:6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Memory Verse: So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Romans 14:12.

Central Thought: God will allow the mystery of iniquity to deceive all who will not be honest with themselves and with God.

Word Definitions: Delusion: "deception." Mystery of iniquity: "secret of lawlessness" (Greek). Satan devises his work under the cover of religion. Honest: "Good, valuable, virtuous, honorable" (Greek). Rioting: "Carousal; that is, to an excess with no restraint, the same as revelling." Chambering and wantonness: "Over-indulgence of bodily pleasure." Provision: "Forethought, considering in advance." Many times the flesh is provided for ahead of spiritual progress. Jesus said, "Seek first the kingdom of God."

LESSON BACKGROUND

Paul is warning concerning the undercover work of Satan who seeks to deceive souls. But he also explains that he will only be able to deceive those who will not love the truth and be honest with their souls. We recall what Jesus said in His

parable about the seed and the sower and how that the only seed that really flourished was that which was sown on good ground, which was those who had an honest and a good heart. Then from the Roman letter we notice Paul's warning against dishonesty and the works of darkness. From John we learn that if we will be honest and come out of darkness into the light, we will have fellowship with God and one another, and the blood of Jesus will cleanse us from all sin. These truths we must face and recognize, and humble ourselves before God and be honest with ourselves lest we be deceived by this great host of wickedness that is now loosed in the world.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why has God allowed the mystery of iniquity to work in the world? 2. Who is it that will be deceived, and how? 3. How can we be sure that we will not be deceived? 4. Why do people generally love darkness rather than light? 5. Can you explain what walking in the light has to do with us being cleansed from all sin?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Jesus said that Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. He that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reproved. Paul said that all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light, and whatsoever doth make manifest is light. When Adam and Eve had sinned in the garden, they were afraid to meet God and have their sins exposed. But they should have known that God knew about them all of the time. We can hide nothing from the Lord, and it is to our eternal disadvantage to try to hide our sins. We must love the truth, and the truth is that we need God and His salvation. The truth is what we are without any pretense or cover-up. It is when people are not honest with God and with their own hearts that they are given a delusion. We must love the truth even if it hurts to know the truth. Then the Lord can forgive our sins and correct our errors and lead us to the land of uprightness. He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but he that confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

The day has come and the light of Heaven is shining through His Word. If we want to know the truth we can know it beyond all question. We can seal our hearts in the truth of God if we are willing to confess the truth about ourselves. Oh, how people are living such lives of pretence and hypocrisy today! Such people cannot and will not see the truth, for it is too straight for them. Being honest with God

is the only sure way to keep from being deceived. When we are searched and tried and found with sin and wrong, we must be honest and acknowledge the truth. Thus we can be rid of the filthy stuff out of our souls. And our hearts can be lifted up toward heaven. Any crooked or shady deal must be opened up and corrected. Thus we can have a true heart and can draw nigh to lay hold of the blessings of God. It is a close life that avails with God, so let us be diligent to keep walking in the light and have sweet fellowship with God. —L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

There is a great day coming when each one of us individually will have to stand before God. We will stand there alone. The very secrets of our hearts will all be revealed. Nothing will be hid. We can't say one thing and think another. We can't put on a big front of being very nice and yet in our heart be indignant or have another feeling. We can't lie to God. We will be just what we really are. We won't be able to blame anyone for our being as we are. We will stand there in all of our wickedness or in all of our righteousness, which is given to us by God. We will either be right before God or we will be wrong. All of our excuses will seem groundless when we stand there before the great searching light of God. Oh, that will be a serious moment for us! Now God has warned us that that day is coming for each of us. "In that day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." Rom. 2:16. "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Eccl. 11:14. Oh, dear ones, we must tremble at His Word! "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" 1 Peter 4:18. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation . . . ?" Heb. 2:3. "And it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Heb. 9:27.

What shall we do about it now? We must come to God's terms. You might say that you do not think the Word of God says this or that, but that still won't change it. It says just what God wants it to say and exactly what He requires of you. It isn't what you think about it. It is what God has said that will judge us in that day. His Word will stand when this old world is on fire. So we must be honest with our own hearts when we read God's Word. If we are dishonest, we receive a deception. God's Spirit doesn't always strive with men. God lets people go their own way when they insist on being dishonest with their own hearts and God's Word. If we do not love the truth we will leave ourselves open for a strong

delusion and we will believe a lie and thereby be damned. Oh, dear ones, search your own hearts today in the light of God's Word.

—M. Miles

I'LL NEVER BE BACK!

We had just finished conducting a street meeting in Sao Paulo, when I was approached by a young Brazilian, Freddie by name, who spoke good English. Freddie is a radio and television star with "Radio Record," the largest in Sao Paulo. He told me that he was tired of his religion and wanted to talk to me about mine. He said that he was a Catholic but was sick of it. He had asked the priest what he should do to get rid of his sins, and the priest would tell him not to worry—just say a few "Hail Mary's" and he would be forgiven. Fred told me that he didn't believe that and had even told the priest that he did not believe it.

I talked with Freddie a good while explaining the way of salvation. He said, "That's what I've been looking for, but the priest would never explain the Bible to me."

When I asked him if he would receive Christ as his Saviour, he said that he would—and did! I introduced him to Don Phillips, a director in Brazil, as I had to return to the city of Campinas and suggested that he go to the office and let Don help him in his new experience with Christ.

Freddie came down to the office on Monday and brought along a young friend of his, the son of a Sao Paulo banker, to talk to Don about Christ. Don was able to lead the young friend to the Lord. Later that week Freddie took Don to lunch and as they approached the cafe, there another young man was waiting for them. Freddie told Don that this friend had a jewelry business in Sao Paulo. "I want you to evangelize him," said Freddie!

Freddie has since brought many of his interested friends to the office that they might find Christ also. The first week that he was saved, he got someone to take his place in a radio rehearsal and came to a prayer meeting. He "took over" the prayer meeting that night with his testimony and really thrilled the Brazilians.

That night he told Don that he wanted him to go with him to show him the key to his past life. Freddie took Don to one of the large night clubs in the city, of which his brother was the manager. The club singer told Don that Freddie was one of the best known radio and TV stars in Brazil.

Freddie also took Don that night to a fine apartment building in the city. Don asked him if he lived there. Freddie told him that no one lived in this place; it had been, like so many others in the great city of Sao Paulo, designed, built and used

for one purpose—sin! It was a very nice apartment . . . with indirect lighting, built-in bar, nicely furnished. The two men knelt in the apartment and had a prayer meeting. Then they started putting Gospel tracts in the drawers, in the glasses on the bar, etc. Freddie said that the two other men who had rented this apartment with him, and the girls who came regularly, would find this Gospel literature. He wanted them to be saved too!

Then, as the two left the apartment and Freddie closed the door behind them, he paused for a moment—looking at the door and said, “Good-bye Hell . . . I’ll never be back!” —D. S.

—o—

December 8, 1974

CHRISTIAN STEDFASTNESS

2 Thess. 2:15; 3:4-16

2 Thess. 2:15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle.

3:4 And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you.

5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;

8 Neither did we eat any man’s bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:

9 Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.

10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.

12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

13 But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.

14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.

15 Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

16 Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all.

Memory Verse: But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil. 2 Thess. 3:3.

Central Thought: Christian steadfastness is shown in an unflinching maintenance of apostolic doctrines which are clearly apprehended and are earnestly embraced. The doctrines or traditions must be firmly held and stoutly defended against all errors.

Word Definitions: "Tradition is that which is handed over from one to another. Compare 1 Cor. 11:23. 'I received of the Lord . . . I delivered unto you. . . He was betrayed.' Here the word 'delivered' and 'betrayed' represent a doing, of which the word for 'tradition' is the act completed. Paul handed over that which his Lord charged him to transmit; Judas handed over Christ to the Jews."—Hom. Com. "Walketh disorderly" would mean "falling out of the ranks and desertion of the post of duty." "Busybody" is "one who concerns himself with other people's affairs."—Web. Dic.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In 2 Thess. 1 and 2 it seems that the Apostle Paul was correcting a wrong idea among the Thessalonians that the "day of Christ is at hand." It appears probable that he was informed of this and was told that some had quit their secular work and were just being lazy. This was causing a lot of trouble in the church because they were being busybodies. It was a burden to the Apostle and he attempted to correct this situation in the verses in our lesson, also instructing them how to take care of those persons and how to treat them. We note that some must have tried to say that this revelation of Jesus' immediate coming came from the Apostle, because he wrote: "We beseech you, brethren, . . . be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as

from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand." Through their lack of work they were bringing in wrong teachings and doctrines.

QUESTIONS:

1 Is it in the power of one discontented person to work much mischief? 2. Is it an important part of the Church to control the unruly and how is that done? 3. What causes discontentment and unruliness in one in the church? 4. How is that one to be treated that is being reproved? 5. How are those who are lazy to be treated?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The traditions are the doctrines that were preached by the apostles. For some years after the ascension of Christ there was no written gospel or epistle. The truth was taught orally by those who were living witnesses of the facts on which the doctrines or traditions were based. The doctrine of justification, sanctification, baptism, feet-washing, the Lord's supper, holy living, oneness of God's people, and divine healing are some of the traditions. We are to be steadfast in accepting them, measuring up to them and living according to them. Some are wanting and working to bring in false teachings even today. We can't afford to let down on any line. We must be steadfast in our living up to them. We must defend them and not let our friendship with another cause us to compromise the truth on any line.

God's purpose is to collect a people, that will be separate from sin, out of the wreck of human life. They are to be clean, pure and holy. He sets them apart for His sacred use. He fills them with the Holy Spirit and through them He works out His will. They are to be lights in this world. God has given them the doctrines plainly in His Word. He is calling them to steadfastness. They are not to be tossed about by every wind of doctrine which man brings to them. A person cannot grow in the knowledge of the truth if he is changed by this one or that one's views. They must get on the Word of God and stand there. This is necessary for growth and maturity in the personal graces of God. Trees must grow or die. A child of God must grow or die. No tree can survive a constant transplanting.

The Apostle was warning them about the erroneous views that had come in among them. He gives explicit directions on how to deal with such erring ones. They were to note that man who walked disorderly and had brought a reproach on the church. His example was to be disregarded. For it to be

brought home to him he must be treated in such a way that he would be convinced of his folly and repent. Few people can endure the test of being left alone. But it gives them an opportunity for reflection, remorse and reform. Though he be shunned, he is not to be passed by in contemptuous silence. He is to be seen privately and spoken to faithfully about his errors with utmost tenderness. It has been said that "virtue ceases to be virtuous when it lacks discretion." In dealing with that one in error, much Christian virtue and discretion must be used.

A busybody should be shunned. A person with the spirit of Christ can't stand to be in the company of someone who is constantly raking up and turning over everybody's faults but his own. The gossipier must be dealt with by the church. He must be shown how he is deeply grieving the hearts of the brethren.

—M. Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Human opinions have tried to supplant the truths of the gospel down through the ages. Those who leave the doctrines of the church chafe under the righteous restrictions of the truth. They are not willing to be bound by the laws of a life of obedience and holiness. When that man finds that he has rebelled against God's laws and he is void of the peace of God, he tries to bring in something else to supplant his loss. In his despair he tries to construct a religion for himself. He takes part of the Word and bases his feelings upon that and tries to convince others that he is right and that it is right for them, too. He puts error in the place of truth, and his human opinion in the place of God's Word. How sad! Many false doctrines are started in just this manner. The true children of God must be aware of false teachers. They will slip in unawares, the Apostle Paul tells us. The Apostle Jude wrote that "ye should earnestly contend for the faith [or doctrines] which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." Jude 3, 4. He goes on to tell us what will happen to them when they die. "He hath reserved in everlasting chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day" Verse 6. How sad! We need to be aware of this and be on our guard.

It is said that there is a plant in the ocean that rises two hundred feet from the depths and floats for many fathoms on the surface, uninjured among the waves and breakers. It is said that it is sustained by clinging to rocks far down below

the surface. Oh, dear ones, we need to maintain a firm hold upon the Rock of Ages. We want to cling tenaciously to the Word of God which will stand when this old world is on fire.

—M. Miles

THE TRIUNE GOD

"Sitting lately," says one, "in a public room at Brighton, where an infidel was haranguing the company upon the absurdities of the Christian religion, I could not but be pleased to see how easily his reasoning pride was put to shame. He quoted those passages, 'I and my Father are one'; 'I in them, and Thou in Me'; and that there are three persons in one God. Finding his auditors not disposed to applaud his blasphemy, he turned to one gentleman, and said with an oath, 'Do you believe such nonsense?' The gentleman replied, 'Tell me how that candle burns?' 'Why,' answered he, 'the tallow, the cotton and the atmospheric air produce the light.' 'Then they make one light, do they not?' 'Yes.' 'Will you tell me how they are one in the other, and yet but one light?' 'No, I cannot.' 'But you believe it?' He could not say he did not. The company instantly made the application, by smiling at his folly; upon which the conversation was changed."

—Sel.

—O—

December 15, 1974

THE CALL OF MARY AND JOSEPH

Luke 1:26b-31, 35b; Matt. 1:18-23

Luke 1:26b The angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,

27 To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

28 And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

29 And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus.

35b The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

Matt. 1:18 Now the birth of Jesus was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.

20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,

23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

Memory Verse: And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. Luke 1:45.

Central Thought: While the birth of Jesus by the virgin Mary brought the greatest blessing to the world, it also caused problems and difficulties for Joseph and Mary.

Word Definitions: Salutation—greeting. Espoused— betrothed, engaged to be married.

LESSON BACKGROUND

For the final three lessons of this quarter, let us study diligently the events surrounding the birth of Jesus Christ. In this lesson we will survey God's dealings with Mary and Joseph. Both were of the lineage of David. Our lesson reveals that Mary and Joseph were both promised to each other to be married. Just how soon this marriage was to be we know not, but it is very apparent that it was sure to be. This was the

stage of life onto which the angel Gabriel walked as he appeared to Mary. It is very evident that Mary was without any hope or dream that such would ever be her lot. She was but a lowly maiden of Galilee. But her faith was quick to grasp hold and she accepted the angel's message without any problem. But with Joseph, it was to be different. In the course of time when it became known that Mary was expecting a child, and Joseph knew about it, no doubt he was troubled as to what to do. He was a just man. Perhaps at first he did not realize that the child Mary was bearing was the Son of God. For this cause he decided that the best thing to do was to secretly put her away and save her disgrace and shame. Can you not see what a problem this was making for them? But then the angel came with a message to him, and it cleared up his mind and dispelled his doubts. Then faith took hold in his heart, too, and he obeyed the angel's voice and took Mary to be his wife.

QUESTIONS:

1. Was it prophesied that Christ would come from the lineage of David? 2. Was Joseph's decision to put away Mary a hasty one? 3. Why do you think he was minded to put her away? 4. Could you say that this matter without God's help could have caused that marriage not to be? 5. To the unbelievers looking on, what do you think this appeared to be?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The truth of the virgin birth of Christ is one of the foundation stones upon which the faith of the saints is builded. If Mary was not a virgin, and if the father of Jesus was a man and not God, then the entire Christian faith is utterly a fraud and a deception. But we know that it is true just as our lesson declares—that Christ was born of a virgin and was fathered by God, the Highest Himself. Mary had known no man, and Joseph, the man she married, was not the father of her firstborn. What a wonderful thing it is to meditate on! To think that the great Creator of the heavens and the earth could condescend to be conceived and brought forth in human flesh! It seems to be beyond what we can fathom, but it surely is true.

But in the reality of this, to the lives of these two, Mary and Joseph, we see that problems arose. People back there were just like people are today. Of course, illegitimate children are such a common thing anymore now that not much is said or thought about it, but back then it was not so prevalent. But any slanderous or disgraceful thing is still talked much

about. When Mary was found to be with child, do you think the general run of people were willing to accept the fact that she was that way by the Spirit of God? You know that they certainly were not. Even Joseph, her espoused husband and a just man, was of a mind to think that she was to be put away as unworthy to be his wife. But, thank God, he did not act hastily about it, but he thought on these things for a while and no doubt prayed about what to do. It was then that the Lord sent word by the angel informing him what was going on and what he should do. And we find him quite willing and obedient to the Lord. But do you think the outside world was straightened out about it? There is no telling how much slander and persecution and criticism was freely handed out both to Mary and Joseph over this. Could it be that years later when the Jews said to Jesus: "We be not born of fornication," that they were throwing slander at him again? But thank God, His grace was sufficient for these dear ones in this trial. Jesus was brought safely and triumphantly into the world—destined to raise many fallen captives of Satan to liberty and salvation.

—L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The beauty and mystery of the supernatural conception of Jesus Christ causes an awe and wonder at the mighty plan of God. How delicately the angel spoke to the sensitive ear of that pure maiden. It is the way of the purity of an angel and the purity of a virgin. In Luke 1:34 Mary asks the angel this question, "How can this be?" How great was the answer to that question which is in our lesson—verse 35b! It is mixed with divine reserve and enthusiasm. It came from that One who can perform miracles of miracles. The time the miracle took place was before Mary could be touched with human lineage.

The part of the Spirit in the conception (as well as in all the after-work of Jesus Christ) seems to suggest that precious work of the Godhead trinity. In the eternal God-head there is a co-relation of life which is scarcely suggested by our rigidly defined human personalities.

What a trial this was to Mary and Joseph! How trying for him to have to suspect her! How trying for her to be suspected by him. How trying for both of them, being as just and pure as they were! There is nothing that we could say that would explain fully the depth of the bitterness, or the shock that it all brought to them. What great anguish of heart they had! What should Joseph do? Could he marry her? In this beautiful scene, we are made aware of the concern that the angel of the Lord had for them. He flew to that

sleeping man's room. Rather than let him continue disquieted, knowing that he sincerely wanted to know God's will, he was given explicit directions as to what course to take. The perplexity came to an end between them, but no doubt the people of that day did their share of gossip, as it is done today. This is some of the cost of our Lord's coming, which makes His coming so wonderful to us. —M. Miles

DIVINE DESIGN!

The tidal river, below the banks of which a pretty rural village stood, suddenly overflowed with an unusual spring-tide, and sweeping away the low banks for hundreds of yards, poured its rushing waters over the whole district for miles around. Nancy's cottage was one of the first to be surrounded by the roaring torrent, and but for the land sloping behind, it must at once have been swept away as a frail leaf. As it was, the rushing waters made it tremble and almost totter, and to save herself from the fast-raising water within the cottage, she retreated up her little staircase. As step by step the waters rose, she retreated still higher, "wondering what the end would be." Her husband was away in the fields a mile or two distant, and no human help was at hand. "And how did you feel then, Nancy?" I inquired, as we talked together in the evening of that memorable day. "O miss, it was dreadful to hear the rushing of the water come so sudden; but I thought, 'Well, the Lord's here, too; and so I sat on the stairs and sang that verse'—

"This awful God is ours,

Our Father and our Love;

He will send down His heavenly powers

To carry us above."

—Selected

(God has a design in all of His works. He could permit the water to come or he could have stopped it before it got to even one or two steps. God could have sent Jesus Christ to Abraham in his day, or even in the day of Jacob, or even when the children of Israel were settled in Canaan after leaving Egypt, but He did not design that to be. God has a plan in His own wisdom that is right. When we belong to God we want to trust His wisdom as well as His power. —M. Miles)

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(Teacher, have you ordered lessons for the 1st quarter of 1975? The first Sunday of the quarter is January 5.)

December 22, 1974

NO ROOM

Luke 2:7, 8, 10-14, 16, 17; Matt. 2:1, 2, 10, 11

Luke 2:7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

16 And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

17 And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

Matt. 2:1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

Memory Verse: Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. Rev. 3:20

Central Thought: God has many blessings for those who will open their hearts and make room for Jesus to live.

Word Definitions: "Heavenly host"—the army of angels which is represented as surrounding the throne of God. 1 Kings 22:19; Psa. 103:20, 21. "Swaddling clothes" are formerly the long, narrow bands of cloth wrapped around a new born baby. "Manger" means a crib or feeding trough. "Stable"—one commentator said that "it was an open court yard attached to the inn or khan, in which the cattle would be shut up at night, and where the poorer travellers might unpack their animals and take up their lodging, when they were either by want of room or want of means excluded from the house." Justin Martyr thought that the stable may have been an adjoining cave to the inn.

LESSON BACKGROUND

History tells us also of the Emperor Augustus, at whose feet lay the whole then known world, and to whose command obedience was rendered in every country, and city, and village. But we read in the Bible about the humble circumstances in which a child was born in one of the obscurest villages, called Bethlehem, in one of Augustus' provinces. This child rises above the Emperor to a majesty unknown in the ages of time. The heavens open and a multitude of angels appear to celebrate His true glory and greatness. "Though he was rich, yet . . . he became poor."

Jesus' parents had gone to Bethlehem to enroll according to the command of Caesar Augustus. They were of royal descent who had fallen into obscurity.

The wise men saw the star in the east and came to worship the new-born King. They may have come from Media, but one commentator suggests that their gifts make one think they might have come from Arabia (Universal Bible Dic.).

In Micah 5:2 we find the prophecy of where Jesus was to be born. It was in Bethlehem of Judea.

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Mary and Joseph were weary and tired. They had come to the end of their long journey. They inquired for a room in the inn, but they were turned down. There was "no room for them in the inn." The man who managed the inn did not know what he was turning down. Jesus had come to his door. If he had opened his door, Jesus would have been born there that night. Oh, dear ones, Jesus is coming to the heart's door of every soul in this world. If each person will open their heart's door, Jesus would be born in their hearts. They would

become a new creature in Christ Jesus. He would take up his abode to live in their very being. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me." What a glorious guest Jesus is! To have Him living within our hearts brings great joy. There are many precious gifts that He can give to us. He has many blessings in life for us. Blessings from God are things that money can't buy. Only God can give that inner, deep-settled peace and perfect satisfaction. Only Jesus can take away that restlessness—that push that causes people to go out and seek something in this world to satisfy. When they find it, it only lasts just a little while and then that old gnawing and restlessness is there again. So it pushes the person out again to seek something else. Oh, such a life of unrest! If it isn't other things of the world, it is the drinking of strong drinks, or the tobacco habit, or the dope, that is used to try to satisfy something deep down in the heart of every person. That longing is a longing for God, but many do not recognize that fact. They push that thought away. How sad! There is no room in their hearts for Jesus.

We have something to give to Jesus. First, we give the gold like the wise men. The gold that Jesus is seeking for is our hearts. He wants us to choose to love and serve Him. He wants us to love Him with all of our heart, mind, soul and strength. He wants us to have room in our life for Him. He wants to receive glory from us. He wants to commune with us and take us to heaven with Him. We are His chosen bride, His Church that He died on the cross to purchase. But we must choose to be His bride. He will never force us to be His.

He wants us to give Him frankincense, which is the incense of praise. We are to send up our praises to the Lord in prayer and song. This causes our Lord's love to be showered upon us.

Not only does He want our praises, but also He will take our myrrh, which is a bitter spice. He will take our troubles and bear them for us. What a wonderful Saviour we have! I trust that you have let Him come into your heart. If not, make room for Him today and find true happiness and a home in heaven after death.

—M. Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

This world was lost in sin. Sorrow, because of sin, was rampant in the world. A Saviour had been promised from the early days of time. The centuries of years rolled by, and finally the day arrived, according to God's great plan, when Jesus was born. It was such a great event that the heavens

could not hold the rejoicing. Out of the sky there suddenly appeared the great multitude of angels. They brought to the humble shepherds this good news: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." They brought "good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." What a glorious announcement! Our souls rejoice today with the angels. We know what they were talking about. The children of God have been "born again" and filled with praises and glory from on high. They have their robes washed in the blood of the Lamb. With joy and rejoicing, they are marching to their heavenly Home through this old cold, sinful world. They are casting all their cares and troubles upon Jesus, who is leading them on and up to those portals of glory. What a glorious blessing it is to be the Lord's. In the Scriptures we find joy not only as a promise, but as a precept—imperative, unconditional and oft-repeated. "Rejoice in the Lord always." Joy is the overflow of happiness.

There had to be another moving of the celestial bodies. A star appeared. The King had been born according to the prophecies. Wise men in the east saw that star. They followed it and they, too, were blessed. "We have also a more sure word of prophecy: whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." 2 Peter 1:19.

—M. Miles

THE BABE OF BETHLEHEM

Because a Babe was born in Bethlehem
One blessed day, long centuries ago,
The light of truth—which glimmered pale and dim
Before He came—now shines with perfect glow,
And wise men still their willing tributes pay
To Him who in a lowly manger lay!

Because a Babe was born in Bethlehem
A greater glory crowns each Mother's brow;
And children, hearing how God honored them
Draw near to Him with eager spirits now!
And who can find—where'er his steps may roam—
A sweeter haven than the Christian home?

Because a Babe was born in Bethlehem
Sad hearts have learned again the joy of song,
While slaves who pined in dungeons dark and grim
Have come to march with liberty along;
And coward souls—made fearless through His Word—
Have braved derision, exile, fire and sword.

Because a Babe was born in Bethlehem
A multitude, from every age and clime,
Shall see God's face, and with His seraphim
Sing praises to Emmanuel's Name sublime.
O ransomed throng! ye well may magnify
The Lamb who died that ye might live on High!

—Robert Crumly

December 29, 1974

CHRIST WELCOMED OR REJECTED

Luke 2:25-32; Matt. 2:13b-16

Luke 2:25 And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Ghost was upon him.

26 And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

27 And he came by the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law,

28 Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,

29 Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:

30 For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

31 Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;

32 A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

Matt. 2:13b The angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

14 When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:

15 And was there until the death of Herod; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.

Memory Verse: Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner. 1 Peter 2:7

Central Thought: Christ's first appearing brought gladness to those who received Him, while it brought trouble and sorrow to those who rejected Him; and so it is today.

Word Definitions: "Devout": From the Greek we see an interesting definition of this word. It means one who takes a hold very well, circumspect (keen and alert in every direction), and reverent.

LESSON BACKGROUND

According to the ceremonial laws in Israel, a woman who bore a male child was counted unclean for seven days. On the eighth day the child was circumcised, and then she was counted unclean yet another thirty-three days. Thus, we know approximately the age of the infant Jesus when his parents brought him to the temple for the offering to be given. He was about 41 days old. It was during this visit to the temple that the aged Simeon was blessed to see the Christ according to the promise that God gave to him. This man was waiting for the consolation of Israel. Israel as a nation was a far cry from the glory she had once known. The awaited Messiah afforded hope for the humbled people, but it was only those who were actually in touch with God who were able to receive him. That he was able to recognize the Christ while but an infant was a full proof that the Holy Ghost was actually leading him.

On the other hand, Herod was totally unprepared and unwilling to welcome the Christ, because of the imagined threat such a One might have to his position. But the poor man actually had nothing to worry about, because our blessed Lord sought not his wretched throne, but the true throne of David that was to be given to him of God; not an earthly throne for man's pride, but an exalted place in the love, faith, and devotion of the souls he would shed His blood to save.

—Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of man was Simeon? 2. Who led him to come to the temple that day? 3. Why was he ready to depart this life after seeing the Christ? 4. What did Herod hope to accomplish by slaying all the Bethlehem babes? 5. Why was not Herod in a condition to receive the Christ as King?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

It is a sad thing to realize that not every one is willing or in a condition to receive Christ and give Him welcome room in the heart. It is sad that He came and has accomplished His great work, and so few are able to understand and place the right value upon His work for it to mean to them the blessing that He intended for it to be. The heart of man can be so blinded by material gain and prosperity and position and worldly honour that the beauties of God are hid from his eyes. But this makes those who find and receive Him even more precious. Jesus knew that He was coming into a cold, dark world, and that He would be rejected by many. It was that way from the start. But what the blinded opposers did not know was that they were only fulfilling the prophecies. We are fulfilling the Word of God in one way or another. God has it made out this way, that His Word will not return unto Him void. It will accomplish one of two things. Either it will bless and save and redeem the soul, or it will condemn and cast to outer darkness. It all depends on how we receive it or reject. It will be a savour of life unto life, or a savour of death unto death. Even today there are those like Herod who like to do away with the name of Christ. But they find themselves, and many times too late, kicking as Saul of Tarsus against the pricks, and fighting against a cause too great to be overthrown. In fact, it seems that the more pressure and opposition the cause of Christ suffers, the greater it prevails.

While receiving Christ and His wonderful life and salvation, let us not forget that Satan, like Herod, is out to kill that Jesus-life out of our souls. He is very crafty and deceptive. Oh, yes, He may seem that he wants to worship Jesus, too, as he puts on the sanctimonious garb. But, beware, for the Christ life in your soul is forever the target of the schemes and devices of Satan. Let us, like Joseph, keep an open ear to the voice of God and be obedient when He speaks. He will keep us from evil, just as He did Christ, and will sustain that sweet heavenly life in our souls. Let us be strong for the Lord in this coming year and be preserved in that blessed state of peace with God.

—Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It was not an accidental meeting of Simeon when he came into the temple and took the baby Jesus up into his arms. The "just" are guided by the Spirit of God. The Lord directs the path of the just—His faithful servants—that good may meet them on the way. Simeon knew that his time was near when he would leave this world. He felt that he could not go until his expectations were fulfilled. He was "waiting for the consolation of Israel." He was waiting with faith. He looked forward to the future with the firm conviction, inspired by the Holy Spirit, that the Son of God was to come soon. "It was revealed unto him," and not to the priests, or to a priest, for they, as a class, were at this time corrupt and unspiritual, and were hostile or unsympathetic toward Christ during His public ministry. God, therefore, passes them by and chooses unofficial persons, such as Simeon and Anna, to be the organs of the Holy Spirit. Simeon was a true priest, though not anointed by man. This aged saint breaks forth in song. A praise and thanksgiving goes forth to His God as he beholds the Saviour in his arms. Now he was ready to die. "Now let me die, since I have seen Thy face."

If we will receive the Lord in our hearts today, He will bless us and songs of joy and thanksgiving will break forth from our hearts. We will then be ready to live or ready to die. It is a glorious thing to have Jesus as our Saviour.

There was another man called Herod, who wanted to see Jesus, too. He had a different spirit and purpose. He was like a crafty fox waiting for the prey. He befriended the wise men, who were seeking Christ, so far as it served his own ends. He called the chief priests, and scribes with a false desire in view. He wanted to know where Christ was to be born. They were glad to serve Him, but he was seeking to find Him and kill Him. This is the way the devil works today. He puts on a false front and comes as "an angel of light," so he can deceive and kill the life of Christ out of any heart that might have received Him. We need to be aware of his tactics. If we will keep yielded to God, He will take care of that life as He did in the days of Herod. If we will follow the Spirit's directions, He will lead us in paths away from the enemy of our soul.

—M. Miles

THE POWER OF JESUS' NAME

Early in the fall God opened to me the door of a wonderful opportunity. He permitted me to spend ten weeks in the interior of China. My home was the Yellow River Gospel Boat. Miss D— and her workers spend their time evangelizing the

unreached villages within walking distance of the banks of the Yellow River. It was there that God permitted me to have my first glimpse of interior village life. What pictures come before me as I write!

It is impossible for me to write of all that God permitted me to see, but I feel that I must pass on to you the two deepest impressions which I received.

The first impression is that heathen China is in the hand of Satan.

Those of us brought up in Christian lands can hardly appreciate the hold which the devil has upon the heathen. Here in China he has been honored for centuries; children have been dedicated to him from their birth; he has received the worship of millions of fear-bound worshippers. Is it any wonder then that demon possession is a common thing and that devil cults are prevalent? Any one engaged in an active, evangelistic work in interior China will witness to the fact that the devil's hold on the heathen is an awful but certain reality. Satan is an active, organized, personal force in heathen China.

If one were to stop there the picture would indeed be a dark and hopeless one, but I hasten to give the second impression which I received from those weeks in the interior. Where God is working the devil is a conquered foe!

God can break every fetter with which the enemy has bound the poor Chinese. Speaking the name of Jesus in faith can put to flight demons which have possessed and darkened hearts for years. One verse of Scripture coming from the lips of an ignorant babe in Christ can break the hold of the wicked one. Wonderful Name which is above all names!

Mrs. Chang had been a Christian for several months, but then in a fit of anger the enemy had again laid his hand upon her. Each day she became more miserable and the fetters which had previously bound her seemed to be tightening again about her. She was aware of her sad condition but seemed helpless. She heard one afternoon that we were going to her home to pray with her. In order to avoid us she planned to spend the entire afternoon threshing beans. She knew that because of bandits we never made a habit of being out long after sunset. She, therefore, worked until late afternoon and then, thinking that we would surely have returned to the Gospel Boat, went home. That very afternoon we had been hindered by business which kept us from starting our walk to her home until late in the afternoon.

God's clocks keep schedule time, and just as she returned to her home, we followed her into the courtyard. Such a time that followed! Miss D— opened the Bible to the fifty-third

chapter of Isaiah and tried to have Mrs. Chang repeat the words, "Jesus was wounded for our transgressions." She could not repeat the words though she tried. She was bound! It was not a case of stubbornness, for it was very evident that she was struggling against a power stronger than her own will. She could open her mouth to speak to us, but seemed powerless to repeat the name of Jesus. As we prayed for her she said again and again, "I can't say it! I can't say it!" In the meantime her family had gathered about her and were earnestly praying, asking God definitely to cast out the demon which held her in his power. Finally, making a desperate effort, she spoke the name of Jesus.

The very instant she spoke that name, even before the sentence could be completed, she burst into tears, fell upon her knees, and sobbed out her confession to God. Peace came at once and she rose to her feet praising God for His forgiveness as well as for the deliverance which had been wrought. As we walked the three and a half miles to the Gospel Boat that night, we were not thinking of the possibility of meeting with bandits, but we were thanking God for the power of that wonderful Name. It had been spoken only once by a seeking soul and the enemy had fled!

—Miss A. Kartoizian

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